

CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS IN
EDUCATION IN ARGENTINA SINCE 1943

By

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PREFACE

Argentina is known as a Catholic country. Its Constitution and laws favor the Catholic church. For example, the President and Vice-President are required to be Roman Catholics. The church also receives state subsidies for its buildings, missionary work, and schools. A divorced person is forbidden to remarry, a law which conforms to Catholic doctrine. The church has always enjoyed a privileged position in Argentina where over nine-tenths of the people are Roman Catholic.

But Argentina also has a secular, anti-clerical, and lay tradition which reached its zenith in the 1880's when religious education was excised (though reinstated from 1943-1955) from the national schools. Protestants, Jews, and lay groups may receive state subsidies for their private schools. Presidents such as Frondizi have been nominally Catholic. The principal democratic parties and student groups have fostered the national universities, supported the university "Reforma," and opposed Catholic universities.

Interest groups and political parties have opposed the church on certain issues in the field of education. Two issues in particular have engendered the largest and

longest disputes: catechism in the public schools and state recognition of the titles and degrees of private universities. On the first issue the church has lost out to lay and secular education on the national level. But this loss has not been uniform: religious education is given in the majority of public provincial schools. On the issue of Catholic or private universities, the church won a stupendous victory in the post-Peronist era--the state agreed to recognize the titles and degrees of private universities under certain conditions. Yet this victory was not total: the state refused to provide financial aid to private universities.

Church-state relations on education were examined because the church regards teaching its doctrine as a central part of its mission and therefore enters the political arena to fight for its way in education. To achieve its educational goals the church must vie for social and political power with other groups and institutions. The two issues selected for study were chosen because they were major issues in Argentina. Economic support of Roman Catholic schools was never much of an issue in Argentina, unlike in the United States. On the other hand, private universities were disputed in Argentina but not in the United

States. The Argentine context itself thus established the focus of this study. Peripheral contests over religious freedom and economic support for Roman Catholic education were examined insofar as they related to the above two issues.

One conclusion that emerges from this study is that the fate of private education is inextricably wound up with the fate of Catholic education. The church and its proponents promote private schools and universities in order to promote Catholic schools and universities. Another conclusion is paradoxical: private or Roman Catholic education seems to thrive when Argentine governments are lay and secularist. When the church was in an open alliance with the government (1943-55), public--not Catholic--education enjoyed its greatest promotion and expansion. The recent progress of church education leads to a third conclusion: other groups, especially those that support lay and secular education, are not able to compete with the church on an equal political and socio-economic footing. In Catholic and developing Argentina, the weakness of countervailing groups and institutions makes for little competition. The scholastic policy of the church results in the education of the elite in its schools, and it is

this group that wields socio-economic and political weight in Argentina: if the elite is not in the key government posts, it is not far from those in them. Thus, provincial and national Ministries of Education become the main promoters of private education. This conclusion is warranted in spite of church protests that government bureaucracy restricts its schools and universities.

Church-state relations are not easily quantifiable. They arouse passions and action behind the scenes. It is difficult to predict when an Argentine Catholic will rally around his church as he did during the overthrow of Peron in 1955. Even statistics on the number of Catholic schools, pupils, and teachers are difficult to obtain. This is due to two factors: in statistical records church education is lumped together with other private schools, pupils, and teachers in the general category of private education. Secondly, the church is reticent to divulge any information about itself.

The sources of church "influence" on politicians are even more elusive. It can only be taken for granted, and not proven, that elected legislatures reflect the opinion of Argentines on church-state issues. During times of dictatorship, it is even more difficult to ascertain the

feelings of Argentines about church-state relations, and to conclude that the officials in command reflect the Catholicity of the people. It is more likely that Argentine governments reflect the religious opinion of the elite. And the religious opinions of the elite may be linked to the social and political power of the Argentine Catholic church as an institution. Roll-call votes in Congress and provincial parliaments can be tabulated; but the decision-making process cannot always be ascertained from a mere tabulation of yeas and nays. It is not easy to calculate if a person acts in a certain manner because he is Roman Catholic, or because he seeks church support behind his career, or whether he fears the church's power to defeat him rather than acting out of love for the church. All these factors may influence his decisions and the fact that he was affected by them illustrates the "influence" of the church. Oftentimes a practicing Catholic might not side with the church on education issues whereas a nominal Catholic promotes, say, church universities. Then, the reasons for political decisions lie in the realm of politics or economics and will involve speculation and hypothesizing, countervailing power, and compromise.

To understand church-state relations on education

in Argentina, therefore, it has been necessary for the author of this study to supplement quantifiable data with written reports and personal interviews. Interviews had to be balanced between statisticians and clerics, between politicians of a pro-Catholic stance and those of a secular bent. Among statisticians and clerics there were divisions. Some interviewees had a clearer or less prejudiced opinion of the issues than others; some simply lied. Few people are neutral on the subject of church-state relations.

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KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

DSCD Argentina. Congreso. Cámara de Diputados. Diario de Sesiones de la Cámara de Diputados. The year given in citations is that of the sessions, not year of publication. Certain of the debates of the 1946 session actually took place early in 1947, but they were printed as part of the 1946 series and will be so cited.

DSCS Argentina. Congreso. Senado. Diario de Sesiones de la Cámara de Senadores. The year given in citations is that of the sessions, not year of publication.

ALA Argentina. Anales de Legislación Argentina. The year given in citations is that which is found on the bound volume and is not necessarily the year of the decree, resolution, or law.

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Argentina is known as a Catholic country, but interest groups and political parties have opposed the church on certain issues in the field of education. Two issues in particular have engendered the largest and longest disputes: catechism in the public schools and state recognition of the titles and degrees of private universities. In 1884, Congress passed a law that established public education as basically laic during school hours. The church never accepted this decision and openly collaborated with the Catholic nationalists who implanted religion in the nation's public schools in 1943. However, this alliance ended when

church and state became rivals in the field of education and Juan Peron abrogated many privileges of the church, including religious teaching in the public schools. Though the nation's schools have remained laic since that time, Catholicism has continued in or has been introduced into the provincial schools of the most populous provinces, and the church's own school system has expanded rapidly, benefiting from increasing state subsidization.

On the issue of Catholic or private universities, the church won a stupendous victory in the post-Peronist era when the state agreed to recognize the titles and degrees of private universities under certain conditions. Yet this victory was not total: the state refused to provide significant financial aid to private universities. This dispute, like the former, symbolized the inability of a fragmented Argentina to attain either a true national consensus on policy or even a coherent policy imposed by one faction upon another. Church-state quarrels of the 19th century continued to absorb time, money, and energy that could have been applied to pressing economic and social problems, problems that did not receive adequate attention from Argentina's private or public educational system.

CHAPTER ONE

THE EMBRYONIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

Introduction

This study undertakes to examine the church in Argentina as a political institution. Its canon law, dogma, doctrines, and official positions treat the field of education: in fact, it regards its mission to teach its dogmas and laws as its most important task. The Spanish crown recognized this "right" of the church and helped finance the educational aspect of the church's mission. But as modernization and growth took place in Argentina after Independence, the state began to view schooling as essential to its aim to create an "educated" and "Argentine" citizenry. This outlook which, at first, led to cooperation between church and state in educating the young, later led to competition between these two socio-political institutions toward the end of the nineteenth century.

Colonial Era

Spanish monarchs willingly gave the church a free hand in the education of Spaniards and the civilization of Indians in the centuries preceding Independence. In the

colonial era there were three types of primary schools: state schools established by the cabildo (also known as the king's schools), religious schools, and private schools. Religious orders taught the Indians Spanish and catechism in mission schools. Because there was little tradition for the state school and because Argentina was sparsely settled by Spaniards, a school was a luxury and usually religious, run by Roman Catholic clerics.

Secondary schools grew out of the need of regular and secular clerics to further educate their prospective members. They were also attended by laymen, almost always the well-heeled sons of ranchers and merchants. If a student wished to continue on to university studies, he had three choices: he could study theology for a doctoral degree at the University of Córdoba, which was founded by the Jesuits in 1622; he could study for a doctorate of medicine at the University of Chuquisaca (La Plata), founded in 1623 in what is now Bolivia; and he could study for a doctorate of law at the University of San Felipe which was founded in 1757 in Chile, or at the University of Córdoba as of 1795,¹ or at the University of Chuquisaca.

¹Juan Carlos Zuretti, Historia eclesiástica argentina (Buenos Aires: Editorial Huarpes, 1945), pp. 113, 115, 121-22.

In primary school a student learned the 3 R's and catechism. He then entered a secondary school to study grammar or Latin and Latin literature for two years; he next graduated to courses of art or philosophy which lasted two to three years. Philosophy was a study of logic, metaphysics, and physics, usually taught by a cleric who gave an overall examination. The student who successfully graduated was considered magister-artium and ready to attend university to study law, theology, or medicine.²

Those laymen who were teachers usually had failed in other endeavors and took the job for the small recompense. It was common for cabildos not to pay the teachers hired by them, so teachers relied on the parents of their students to pay them money or kind. By contrast, the religious schoolteachers did not charge tuition, since the religious orders supported them. The Jesuits, who ran the best primary and secondary schools and Argentina's only university, lived off the profits of their estancias; the Franciscans lived off alms.³

²Ibid., p. 113.

³For a good discussion of colonial education see Juan Carlos Zuretti, "La evolución de las ideas pedagógicas

The Spanish Crown controlled all activities of the church in the new world; similarly, the cabildos oversaw religious as well as lay education. The Real Provisión de 1771 set standards for the hiring of teachers which included an examination of their writing, reading, arithmetic, and Christian doctrine, information of good conduct, and limpieza de sangre.⁴ Cabildos had to approve the establishment of any schools within their jurisdiction as well as the teachers, the tuition charged if it was a state school, the salary of teachers (often paid to support religious teachers also) and the texts and equipment. And state subventions supported many religious schools if the cabildo was willing and able to grant them.

Despite some state funding, education had a privileged and aristocratic character and was mainly for boys. Some poor students were able to attend state schools without paying when they were supported by funds from the cabildo and the tuition of other students. Girls attended

en la Argentina: II--La escuela colonial," Criterio, XIX (November 28, 1946), 517-18.

⁴Antonio Salvadores, La Instrucción primaria desde 1810 hasta la sanción de la ley 1420 (Buenos Aires: Consejo Nacional de Educación, 1941), p. 19.

the few schools for them established by rich ladies and nuns, often acting jointly. In general, not very many school-aged children attended school because they could not afford them, schools were scarce, and poor teaching methods were used: rote memorization and drills, as well as corporal punishment.⁵

Lay teachers were expected to teach the Roman Catholic religion to their pupils: religion was not excluded from Argentine state schools until the latter half of the nineteenth century. However, Argentine state schools began to exclude clerics as teachers and administrators.⁶ For example, Manuel Belgrano, honored as the father of Argentine primary schools, left money to establish schools run by laymen, but Christianity was to be taught in these schools along with other subjects.⁷

Laicism in the sense of lay or state administration of education was promoted by the rapid economic development of Buenos Aires, which was partly stimulated by the Bourbon

⁵Rosalba Aliaga Sarmiento, La instrucción primaria durante la dominación española (Buenos Aires: Consejo Nacional de Educación, 1940), pp. 84-86, 107.

⁶Salvadores, pp. 19-20.

⁷Aliaga Sarmiento, pp. 201-3.

reforms of Carlos III. More money was directed toward public education and a system of municipal schools. In 1805 Buenos Aires even made public education free, the first cabildo in Argentina to do so.⁸ But the English invasions and the independence movement retarded this development.⁹

Independence to 1884

Independence

The upheaval that ensued with the revolution for independence caused education to retrogress because the cabildos could not spare money for state schools and because authorities were occupied with other matters. Schools disappeared altogether after the struggle for independence began in 1810 in the provinces of San Juan, San Luis, and La Rioja. In Córdoba, the rural schools set up by Bishop San Alberto and, later, Viceroy Sobremonte, disappeared. Salta, once a leading center of education, was hard hit.¹⁰ Though Belgrano donated 40,000 pesos to found four schools in the provinces, only one was ever completed--in Jujuy in

⁸These municipal schools were begun in 1720, and were managed by the University of Buenos Aires from 1821-1828 when they were dependent on the provincial government. Later, they became national schools.

⁹Salvadores, p. 17.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 110-11; 198-99.

1825.¹¹ In this period, school systems survived only in those provinces with the means and traditions of public support for education--Buenos Aires, Córdoba, and Mendoza.¹²

The church was no longer in a position to step into the educational vacuum left by the state. Its organization was disrupted by the impact of the independence struggle and the interruption of normal ties with Rome, which under the patronato had passed through the Spanish court; all existing bishoprics were vacant after 1819. The number of clerics and, therefore, cleric teachers dwindled, and the two seminaries in Córdoba and Buenos Aires were deficient in graduating priests to replace those who left Argentina. Without supervision many of the secular and regular clergy fell into corrupt ways.¹³

State officials realized that education was deplor-

¹¹Ibid., p. 230.

¹²Salvadores, pp. 64-66.

¹³The Pope finally appointed titular bishops to these vacant sees in 1832. (J. Lloyd Mecham, Church and State in Latin America [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1934], pp. 57, 84-86, 226.) For a synopsis of the sorry position of the church after independence consult Guillermo Furlong, S.J., "El catolicismo argentino entre 1860 y 1930," Historia argentina contemporánea, 1862-1930, Academia Nacional de la Historia (4 vols., Buenos Aires: El Ateneo, 1963-67), II, 251-52.

able in both the public and private sectors and interested themselves in remedying it. In 1810 the cabildo of Buenos Aires commissioned two regidores to study educational reform: they visited every school in Buenos Aires. Church and state were educationally allied: the priest Dean Funes approved the recommendations of the two regidores for improving instruction in church schools, and courses on Christianity were favored for public schools. Reforms that the cabildo and Junta tried to institute came to naught.¹⁴

Rivadavia

As a minister in the government of Buenos Aires in the early 1820's, Rivadavia carried out a reform of the church with the support of the provincial legislature and some liberal ecclesiastics who were opposed by other clerics who even dabbled in plotting the overthrow of the government.¹⁵ In 1822 tithes and the ecclesiastical fuero were abolished, and the smaller houses of the regular clergy were disestablished. Some church properties were confiscated and, in turn, the province agreed to give the

¹⁴Aliaga Sarmiento, p. 194.

¹⁵Ricardo Levene, A History of Argentina (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1937), pp. 364-65.

church an annual subsidy and to construct church buildings; but the net effect of Rivadavia's measures was to weaken the church.¹⁶

In 1821 Rivadavia authorized the setting up of the University of Buenos Aires under the direction of Dr. Alberto Sáenz, an ordained priest. The cabildo eclesiástico provided funds from its treasury for the chairs of philosophy and Latin.¹⁷

Rivadavia also concerned himself with the schooling of girls. In 1823 he set up a separate school system for girls under the Ministry of Government; money for these schools was to be raised by rich ladies in the Sociedad de Beneficencia.¹⁸

In 1825 a commercial treaty between England and Argentina gave the English the right to found schools and to

¹⁶Guillermo Gallardo, La política religiosa de Rivadavia (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Theoria, 1962), pp. 71-72.

¹⁷The University was inaugurated in 1821 and included a department of primary schools which controlled all primary schools except those for girls, which were organized under the Sociedad de Beneficencia in 1823. Since the University contained all grade levels it was a microcosm of an educational system for all Argentina. (Levene, pp. 365-67.)

¹⁸Salvadores, p. 106.

practice their religion publicly or privately (article 12). In 1827 the first English academies opened: the curriculum was humanistic and commercial, and religion was not mentioned. The best families sent their children to these English private schools, downgrading the public schools and university.¹⁹

Rosas, 1835-52

As governor of the province of Buenos Aires, Rosas allied himself with the church and tried to diminish the influence of the English schools since they were run by Protestants, but neither they nor their teachers disappeared despite two decrees of 1831 and 1844 requiring teachers to profess the Roman Catholic faith.²⁰ Rosas continued the policy of preceding governments of granting state subsidies to religious schools and backing religious education in the public schools. The Jesuits, expelled from Argentina since 1767, were invited to return by Rosas, who restored the convent and school of San Ignacio to them. But the Jesuits did not adequately extol the virtues of

¹⁹Zuretti, "La evolución de las ideas pedagógicas en la Argentina: IV--Las escuelas públicas y privadas de 1813 a 1829," Criterio, XX (January 2, 1947), 15.

²⁰Salvadores, p. 195.

his government to their young pupils, so they were again expelled in 1843; half of the total of 39 Jesuits had already emigrated since 1841.²¹ Rosas also purged the University of Buenos Aires of Unitarian professors and instituted religion courses in the curriculum. Government financial stringency meant that subsidies were smaller, and the University stagnated.

The government's ability to subsidize education was diminished by a French blockade of its port, and in 1838 the Sociedad de Beneficencia was notified that state funds were unavailable and that it would have to charge tuition in its schools. Private and public primary schools folded from 1830 to 1850; in 1830 there were 39 public primary schools with 50 teachers serving 2,500 pupils and 75 private schools with 80 teachers and 2,500 students; whereas, in 1840, Buenos Aires province had only 5 public primary schools with 10 teachers and 700 pupils and 30 private primary schools with 40 teachers and 1,500 students--a situation that did not change materially for the remainder of the decade.²² Provincial schools were turned over to the police

²¹ Enrique Arana (h.), Juan Manuel de Rosas en la historia argentina, Instituto Panamericano de Cultura (3 vols., Buenos Aires: Compañía General Fabril Financiera S.A., 1954), I, 625-26.

²² Ibid., pp. 554, 558, 560.

department to administer in 1842.²³ The poor remained largely outside the educational system of Buenos Aires--except in the girls' schools of the Sociedad--until the advent of Sarmiento.

Provinces.--The state of education depended in large measure on the governor or caudillo of a given province, a strong man leaving his imprint upon the school system. Usually the municipalities attended to the schools in their locale. Entre Ríos stands out for the efforts of its governors Pascual Echagüe and Justo José de Urquiza to extend public education. Religious education was omnipresent, teachers had to be Roman Catholic, and many provinces refused to recognize the religious toleration of the 1825 English commercial treaty, e.g., San Luis, Tucumán, Corrientes, Santa Fé, and Córdoba.²⁴ The governors of Mendoza, Entre Ríos, Salta, and Córdoba emulated Rosas in inviting the Jesuits, although they did not necessarily act upon the invitation, to set up schools (especially secondary) in their provinces.²⁵

²³Ibid., p. 559.

²⁴Guillermo Furlong, S.J., La tradición religiosa en la escuela argentina (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Theoria, 1957), pp. 48-50.

²⁵Arana, I, p. 624.

In spite of economic blockage and internal civil strife, provincial private--and especially public--education gradually improved. Although the figures can be regarded as approximations at best, one source suggests that by 1840 there were 76 public primary schools with 78 teachers and 3,830 pupils and 36 private primary schools with 38 teachers and 1,740 pupils; whereas, in 1830, there had been 45 public primary schools with 48 teachers and 3,010 students and 41 private primary schools with 45 teachers and 2,010 pupils. And by 1850 there were 125 public primary schools with 139 teachers and 7,700 pupils and 45 private schools with 52 teachers and 2,003 students.²⁶

Buenos Aires and the Confederation, 1852-61

Buenos Aires.--After the fall of Rosas, Buenos Aires functioned for a time as a separate state enjoying de facto independence from the rest of Argentina. During this period, educational development was hurt by political infighting, lack of economic resources, and administrative confusion. There was a proliferation of educational agencies--Sociedad de Beneficencia, the University, the municipalities,

²⁶Ibid., I, pp. 554, 558, 560.

the province--as well as frequent changes in the administrative mechanisms charged with overall supervision of educational problems.²⁷ This state of affairs changed for the better when Domingo Sarmiento became Chief of the Department of Schools in Buenos Aires from 1856 to 1861. Sarmiento worked to expand the public school system of the province, but allowed the teaching of religion in the public schools by Roman Catholic priests outside of class hours.²⁸

The Confederation.--The other provinces joined together in a Confederation under the Constitution of 1853. The Constitution made Roman Catholicism a state religion, with the patronato to be exercised by the President and Senate. Both the President and Vice-President of Argentina had to be Roman Catholic, and the state was obligated to sustain the church. Among other things, Congress was to further the conversion of Indians to Roman Catholicism.²⁹

²⁷Juan Manuel Chavarria, La escuela normal y la cultura argentina (Buenos Aires: El Ateneo, 1947), p. 292.

²⁸Speech by Deputy Absalón Rojas, DSCD 1946, X, p. 573.

²⁹Juan Casiello, Iglesia y estado en la Argentina (Buenos Aires: Editorial Poblet, 1948), p. 334.

Education, however, was left up to the provinces, as had been the practice since 1821; article five made public education gratuitous but said nothing about it being obligatory.

The Confederation Congress voted the church a regular subsidy that was to compensate it for its loss of income from the tithes, which had now been abolished in all provinces.³⁰ Such funds were technically available for use in founding church schools. But education advanced very little except for the organization of its administration on the provincial level. Governors regarded themselves as vice-patrons in exercise of the national patronato and thus converted convents into schools, contracted clerical teachers, and invited orders to their provinces to found schools. Some provinces such as San Juan and Corrientes made education theoretically obligatory in their constitutions, but most let the municipalities take care of it, and they lacked the resources to reach more than a small minority of the school-age population. The University of Córdoba was nationalized by the Confederation in 1854. Urquiza also extended national secondary education, but

³⁰Furlong, "El catolicismo," p. 256.

post-elementary education was rare in the Confederation.³¹

President Urquiza ordered in 1855 the publication and use in the public schools of a catechism Instrucciones cristianas by Escolástico Zegrada. His successor Santiago Derqui also arranged with Pope Pius IX for the return of the Jesuits to reopen the schools of Córdoba and Santa Fe.³²

National Organization, 1862-1884

In 1862, with Bartolomé Mitre as president, Argentina began its modern history as a unified nation. Education could now be constructed on a national level: a Ministry of Religion, Justice and Public Instruction was set up. An 1865 accord was signed with eight provinces to give their schools financial aid from the national treasury. Mitre became known as the "Founder of Secondary Education in Argentina" when he set up in 1863 the Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires as a model for national secondary schools. Its first rector, a cleric, was succeeded by a Frenchman who drew up a six-year plan of studies for the bachillerato degree with religion and sacred history included in the.

³¹Leoncio Gianello, "La enseñanza primaria y secundaria (1862-1930), Historia argentina contemporánea, II, p. 120.

³²Furlong, La tradición, pp. 71-72.

curriculum.³³

Sarmiento became president in 1868 and planned with his education minister Nicolás Avellaneda to educate all social classes everywhere in Argentina. Ley 463 of 1871 provided for the subsidizing by the national treasury of school buildings, furniture, books, supplies, and salaries of teachers and inspectors.³⁴ Avellaneda as president (1874-80) continued to promote education. Plans of study were made uniform for national primary, secondary, and normal schools. But since provinces for the most part controlled education within their boundaries, no uniform law of education was drawn up.

In 1875 the Province of Buenos Aires drew up a Ley de Educación Común de la Provincia. A Consejo General was created to approve the establishment of public and private schools; every district would elect its own Consejo. Teachers were no longer required to be Roman Catholic but only to have good mental and physical health, good conduct, and professional qualifications. Private schools were no long-

³³Chavarria, p. 76.

³⁴Anales de legislación argentina: complemento, años 1852-1880 (Buenos Aires: Editorial La Ley, 1954), p. 934.

er subsidized. Roman Catholicism was still taught, but the religious beliefs of others were to be respected.³⁵

In the same year Congress passed a law, No. 758, to establish normal schools for teachers of primary pupils in the capital of every province. A previous law had already established two in Paraná and Corrientes. The four-year plan of studies did not include the Roman Catholic religion, only courses of morality. Sarmiento began to recruit teachers from abroad to set up normal schools and to teach in the universities. Sixty-five teachers from the United States came between 1869 and 1898 to found or rehabilitate eighteen normal schools, each with its model grade school and kindergarten.³⁶

By 1880 the civil strife between the Province of Buenos Aires and the other provinces had receded enough to allow the organization of the government on a definitive basis. The city of Buenos Aires was federalized as the capital of a united Argentina. At the beginning of 1881,

³⁵In accordance with this law, the Sociedad de Beneficencia handed over its schools to the Consejo General and Sarmiento was named the Director General of this Consejo. (Salvadores, pp. 227-36, 336-48.)

³⁶Alice Houston Luiggi, 65 Valiants (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1965).

the municipality of Buenos Aires ceded its schools to the Nation, and it was decreed that the provincial school laws of Buenos Aires would still apply to these schools. Thus, primary education was free and compulsory since these schools were under the 1875 Ley de Educación Común de la Provincia. At the same time, a decree created a Consejo Nacional de Educación to govern these national schools. Sarmiento left the Consejo General de Educación of the Province of Buenos Aires to become the Superintendent of the Consejo Nacional de Educación (CNE); eight inspectors made up this entity along with the Superintendent. Besides arranging for the Congreso Pedagógico of 1882, the CNE also carried out a school census in 1883, which showed that only 29.3% of the school-age population (five to fourteen years old) was attending school.³⁷ Both the Congress and Census of 1883 spurred on efforts to draw up a national education law that would encompass the former decrees and promote literacy. Congress began to work on such legislation during the administration of Roca (1880-86), a procedure which embroiled laicists in a battle with the church.³⁸

³⁷Salvadores, p. 360.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 355-62.

The Church.--The Argentine church was plagued throughout the nineteenth century by a lack of clerics, regular and secular. Its hierarchy and leaders tended to reflect a traditionalist conservative mentality and did not favor progressive Catholic organizations when they did appear. Rather than come up with constructive ideas of their own, the church's leaders tended to resist and to lash out at the increasingly secular and liberal cultural and intellectual climate of Argentina. Argentine Catholicism was isolated from Europe and did not meet the challenges from Masonry and anti-clericalism which were gaining ground among professionals, teachers, and politicians.³⁹

It was not until the 1860's that the church became organized on a strictly national basis; until 1865 the dioceses of Argentina were under the control of a foreign metropolitan, the Archbishop of Charcas, but in that year two archdioceses were established in Argentina, those of Buenos Aires and Paraná. The church sought to restore its influence by building up the number of clerics and teaching catechism in both the public and private schools. The

³⁹Néstor T. Auza, Los católicos argentinos: su experiencia política y social (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Diagrama, 1962), pp. 12, 72, 76, 125.

government agreed to subsidize seminaries to graduate more priests, and Ireland and various European orders sent clerics to help. The Jesuits, who had been invited back to Argentina in 1860, opened schools in Santa Fé and Buenos Aires (Colegio del Salvador) that became universities a century later. Evangelization of the Indians in the North and South was carried out after 1875 with federal aid.⁴⁰ The church also received state subventions for its own schools.⁴¹

The conservatism of the church led it to hamper efforts to create a public and secular school system. It considered the schoolteachers imported from abroad as enemies of the faith and protested the "dechristianization" of education. Thus, in Paraná, for example, clerical protests succeeded in putting a course in religion, morality, and civics into the curriculum of the local normal school. But the national government insisted that it be taught by a priest before or after regular class hours and that it not be required.⁴²

⁴⁰Furlong, "El catolicismo," pp. 256-59, 262-63.

⁴¹María Elina R. B. Demaria, La instrucción primaria en la Argentina, 1884-1936 (Buenos Aires: El Ateneo, 1936), p. 61.

⁴²Chavarria, pp. 66-73, 76.

CHAPTER TWO

LAIC VICTORIES OF THE GENERATION OF 1880

Proponents of Secularism

Argentina's economically dominant classes of the 1880's sought to modernize the country and themselves by adopting the ideas and institutions of the more developed countries of England, France, and the United States. The generation of 1880 turned to Masonry, liberalism, materialism, positivism, and laicism. Both the upper and middle classes wanted to diminish the influence of revealed religion and provide an opportunity to the young through education, itself an instrument for the modernization of Argentina and a tool for its unification.¹

The groundwork laid by secularists in the post-independence period flowered into a series of laic reforms in the 1880's. These reforms consisted of civil marriage, abolition of parochial registration of births, marriages, and deaths, the secularization of cemeteries, and Law 1420,

¹Torcuato S. Di Tella, "Raíces de la controversia educacional argentina," in Los fragmentos del poder, de la oligarquía a la poliarquía argentina (Buenos Aires: Editorial Jorge Alvarez, S.A., 1969), p. 312.

which excluded religious education from the public schools during school hours.

Lay and secular ideologies became entrenched among the professionals, teachers, and politicians of the Argentine upper and middle classes. Masonic lodges promoted laicism, and President Roca's Minister of Justice and Public Instruction Eduardo Wilde was a Mason, as was "Grand Master" Sarmiento and other prominent politicians who had the seats of power.² French positivist thought permeated the normal schools and the Faculty of Law of the University of Buenos Aires and looked upon revealed religion as unscientific. Normal school graduates became teachers in provincial schools and spread positivist philosophy.³ The American instructors in these normal schools were mainly Protestant and opposed to catechism in public schools. Little wonder, then, that the growing professionalization of Argentine teachers pitted them against clerics who had long dominated Argentina's educational system because of their superior formal education.⁴ French liberalism was

²Furlong, La tradición, pp. 67, 100.

³Chavarria, p. 76.

⁴John J. Kennedy, Catholicism, Nationalism and Democracy in Argentina (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1958), p. 190.

imitated by prominent Argentines, who also emulated its anticlericalism and secular thinking which saw society as made up of all creeds and the school as a neutral terrain for all inhabitants, a source of solidarity and social unity.⁵ "Argentinidad" would be promoted by the secular, public school. And lastly, the material development of the nation was to be patterned after that of the United States which drew its immigrants from northern Europe. Argentina could better attract these mainly Protestant immigrants if its Roman Catholicism was downplayed and a free and lay education offered to their children.⁶

The Educational Uproar of 1884: Law 1420

The culmination of lay and liberal influence in Argentina was Law 1420 which provided a national administrative structure for primary education and established that national primary schools would be tuition-free, based on promotion between grades, and laic. It was this latter

⁵ Speech by Juan B. Terán in 1933, quoted in Bishop Antonio Caggiano and Archbishop Nicolás Fasolino, "Pastoral a los Católicos de la Provincia de Santa Fé," April 22, 1945, in Criterio, XVIII (April 26, 1945), 367-69.

⁶Ibid.

principle that raised a furor in the 1880's and is still being disputed even today.

Precedents

As early as 1877 Congress adopted Law 934 which gave the state the exclusive right to grant titles to the graduates of secondary schools. Graduates of private secondary schools had to pass examinations given by a committee of five persons, three of whom represented the national colegios. Only then would their certificates be recognized by the national colegios and universities. Another article in this legislation of 1878 provided that students from private or provincial institutes of higher education could enter national university faculties only after passing examinations given by the national universities on the subjects studied in those institutes. This law thereby affirmed the power of the state by which it could force private schools on the secondary and higher levels to meet national standards.⁷ However, no uniform system of national secondary schools was set up. Instead, laicists and liberals turned their attentions to the primary level.

⁷Ley 934, September 1878, is discussed in detail in Américo Ghioldi, Libertad de enseñanza (Buenos Aires: Universidad de Buenos Aires, 1961), pp. 48-77.

The question of establishing an administrative structure for national primary schools funded by public taxes also involved the question of religious education in these schools. Two congresses that met in 1882 wrestled with the issue of Catholic teachings in the national primary schools. One was a Congress of Workers presided over by Pietro Geriomet in the Teatro Verdi in the Boca. Although this congress was more concerned with working class morals and salaries, it also addressed itself to the issue of religion in the schools where workers sent their children. The congress declared itself in favor of public schools without dogmas.⁸ This secular position of the workers may be explained by the fact that they were foreigners of diverse nationalities and creeds (or of no religious creed whatsoever). Also, clerical influence upon the working class was not strong. Since workers in Argentina had little political power at the time, this congress influenced the national Congressmen far less than the Pedagogical Congress of 1882.

The Pedagogical Congress of 1882 was presided over

⁸Speech by Silvano Santander, DSCD 1946, X, p. 591.

by Onésimo Leguisamón and influenced by Sarmiento's newspaper articles in El Nacional: it was held under the auspices of the Ministry of Justice and Public Instruction headed by Eduardo Wilde. Its ostensible purpose was to bring together the teachers who could help in improving public instruction through a coordination of methods and standards. Since participation was limited to secular teachers, to the exclusion of clergy and religious teachers, Catholic writers such as Furlong claim that it was rigged against the church.⁹ One of the conclusions of this Congress was: "Las escuelas del Estado deben ser esencialmente laicas: las creencias religiosas son del dominio privado."¹⁰

The struggle between opponents and supporters (who included President Julio A. Roca¹¹) of Law 1420 had one of its principal battlegrounds in the press. Sarmiento, who opposed catechism in the public schools during class time, headed the journalistic battle. His nephew Belín obtained

⁹Furlong, La tradición, p. 89.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Much credit for this law must go to Roca who wanted Congress to formulate a law for primary schools and backed its laicism from 1881-84. (José Arce, "Genesis y tramitación de la ley 1420," Publicaciones del Museo Roca, XII [Buenos Aires: Técnica Impresora S.A.C.I., 1966], 149-83.)

the support of Mitre and other newspaper publishers, including those of foreign language newspapers. Liberals, as they came to be called, such as Sarmiento, Mitre, Groussac, Gallo, Saenz Peña, shaped newspapers such as La Nación, El Nacional, and Sudamérica as bastions of the principles of laicism. The ideas diffused by this press helped to prepare the educational as well as the political and economic thought of the national Congressmen.¹²

Roman Catholic Resistance

Astounded by the headway that laic ideas were making in Catholic Argentina, Argentine Catholics fought back. Of all the lay reforms, none gave rise to such a fierce battle as the issue of secular versus religious education in the public school. The hierarchy of the church insisted on catechism in the public schools as a necessary means to maintain the faith. Canon law and the Syllabus of Pius IX condemned the separation of education from Roman Catholicism.

In the first half of 1882, Argentine Catholics organized themselves to fight laicism. Catholic laymen headed by José Manuel Estrada founded a newspaper La Unión in Buenos Aires to counterattack the liberal press; the Jes-

¹² María Elina R. B. de Demaria, La instrucción primaria en la Argentina, 1884-1936 (Buenos Aires: El Ateneo, 1936), p. 10.

uits of the Colegio del Salvador aided La Unión. Two weeks later the archdiocese began its own newspaper La Voz de la Iglesia, headed by an ecclesiastic. Other pro-Catholic newspapers were founded in the provinces by laymen and clerics.¹³ But it was realized that a religious press was not enough to combat liberalism and laicism since the more prominent newspapers, political parties, and the government were in the hands of the liberals: political organization would be necessary.

The Asociación Católica de Buenos Aires was formed in 1883 by José Manuel Estrada as an offshoot of the Club Católico, founded in 1876-77 by the priest Félix Frías. Aided by a monsignor, this Asociación organized the Primer Congreso Nacional de los Católicos Argentinos in 1884. Made up of lay and clerical leaders from all over Argentina, the congress sought the entrance of Catholics into politics to counter liberals and their programs, especially Law 1420. A Catholic political party Unión Católica emerged from this congress.¹⁴

¹³ Both Furlong, "El catolicismo argentino entre 1860 y 1930," Historia argentina contemporánea, 1862-1930 (Buenos Aires: El Ateneo, 1964), II, 270; and Auza, Los católicos argentinos, pp. 27-29, contain a nice synopsis of the Catholic press in Argentina but go into little detail.

¹⁴Auza, pp. 33-38; and Furlong, ibid., 270-73, 280.

Law 1420

But Roman Catholic resistance to Law 1420 was too little and too late. The national Congress had debated it from July 4 to 14, 1883, and had passed it on June 23, 1884.¹⁵ Law 1420 dealt principally, though not exclusively, with the national primary schools, which in 1884 were found only in the Federal District, national territories, and certain unimportant agricultural colonies. It reaffirmed the authority of the Consejo Nacional de Educación (CNE), which had been established by decree a few years before, over these schools, and it earmarked certain specific sources of revenue for their support. It also provided that the CNE should direct the national normal schools, whose curriculum was to be established by Congress and the Ministry of Justice and Public Instruction. And it further set minimum standards, for private as well as public primary schools. A Consejo Escolar de Distrito was to oversee both private and national schools in each school district. These public bodies could approve or disapprove a private school's site,

¹⁵For a blow-by-blow account of the passage of this law, consult Gregorio Weinberg (ed.), Debate parlamentario sobre la Ley 1420, 1883-1884 (Buenos Aires: Editorial Raigal, 1956).

building conditions, classroom conditions, and capacity of a teacher to teach. They could inspect to assure that required subjects, plus hygiene and morality, were being taught. If standards were not met, the Consejo Escolar could close down a private school in its district.

The main debate on Ley 1420 was over its article eight which stated the following:

La enseñanza religiosa sólo podrá ser dada en las escuelas públicas por los ministros autorizados de los diferentes cultos, a los niños de su respectiva comunión, y antes o después de la horas de clase.¹⁶

Catholic anxieties were fed by the fear that all public schools might soon be secularized, even though this article eight only pertained to the national primary schools. The latter were not very numerous until the passage of the Ley Láinez in 1905, which provided for the establishment of national schools in the provinces. The more numerous public schools belonging to the provinces were left out of this legislation. Neither did it refer to secondary schools. And proponents of the law further pointed out that it did not ban religious education from the national schools: it only restricted the hours in which it could be given. The

¹⁶A partial text of this law may be found ibid.; article eight is quoted on p. xxvii.

required curriculum itself was not irreligious: it included a course on morality that discussed God and His laws.

Catholic opposition to Law 1420 was not directed at the state's prerogative to oversee and set standards for private schools. Rather, it was against the restriction of the teaching of catechism in the national schools. Catechist classes in the more numerous provincial and private schools were untouched by this law. Initial Catholic opposition, it must be concluded, was not just to the immediate consequences but also to the presumed long-range intent of this law: it was an effort to hamper the creation of a public school system free from Catholic influence of control.¹⁷

Implementation

The Argentine church maintained its opposition to laicism, while the government demonstrated its intention to expand public and lay education on the primary level. Right after the passage of Law 1420 the government found itself embroiled in a dispute with the church: the Capitular Vicar of Córdoba issued a pastoral to the laity forbidding them to send their children to a normal school directed by

¹⁷Luiggi writes that the church was "jealous of its lost opportunities . . . was continually hampering the efforts . . . of Sarmiento and the government . . . to create a school system free to every dweller in Argentina. . . ." (65 Valiants, p. 27.)

Protestant women. He was supported by the Bishop of Salta, who issued a similar pastoral to his own laity, and by two other vicars. When the government tried to force the Capitular Vicar of Córdoba to back down, the Cathedral chapter protested and supported him, as did Catholic professors at Córdoba and Buenos Aires national universities. The government retaliated by suspending all of the vicars and the Bishop of Salta, and by dismissing the professors. The government also ejected the Apostolic Delegate from the country when he met privately with the Protestant director of the Córdoba normal school in hopes of getting her to permit the teaching of catechism in the school in exchange for the church's lifting of its pastoral ban against the school.¹⁸ The government had made its point that the church should not interfere in the public schools.

In 1884, the Primer Congreso Nacional de los Católicos Argentinos resolved to combat Law 1420. The government replied with harsher rulings. An 1885 directive stated that ministers of different faiths must receive permission from the district school councils and have at least fifteen pupils in order to hold religious classes in the

¹⁸ See Furlong, "El catolicismo," pp. 268-69; and Meham, Church and State in Latin America, pp. 239-41.

schools.¹⁹ Moreover, in 1904, the CNE ruled that religious education was to be given only to those students whose parents previously requested it. A later ruling said that religion classes had to end one-half hour before school began, or begin one-half hour after school classes ended.²⁰

The Argentine Counter Reformation: 1884-1943

The church failed in the 1880's to convince Argentines who held the reins of power and teaching posts and guided political parties that a Roman Catholic education was better for Argentines than a liberal and secular one. Not only did the church not overturn Law 1420, but, as will be seen, its one university folded after a decade (1910-20). The greatest setback for the church after the laic legislation of the 1880's was the Reforma of the national universities, which further secularized them. In general, Argentine Catholicism was not fecund in ideas and works responding to new situations from 1870 to 1920: progressive Catholic organizations were not supported by the hierarchy and even stymied by it.²¹

¹⁹ Casiello, Iglesia y estado en la Argentina, p. 332.

²⁰ Furlong, La tradición, p. 101.

²¹ Auza, Los católicos argentinos, pp. 23, 72, 76, 125.

On the national level, Argentines were not pursuing "Catholic" goals and did not see religion as relevant to the socio-economic issues of Argentina. They saw the legal and constitutional traditions of Argentina as adequately protecting Roman Catholic interests; after all, the church was subsidized by the state and the president of Argentina had to be Roman Catholic. Because of the prevalence of such attitudes on the part of the laity, a Roman Catholic political party hardly got off the ground.²²

After 1920 Catholic groups with explicitly Catholic goals began to attract more adherents. The church convinced laymen to work for its ends especially through the Unión Popular Católica or Acción Católica Argentina. More conservative governments rescinded many of the gains of the university Reforma and replaced liberal administrators and professors with ultra-nationalist and Catholic ones. But the greatest triumph of the church's "counter reformation" came in 1943, when a military junta suspended Law 1420 and established catechism in the public schools.²³

²² Ibid., p. 23.

²³ Richard J. Walter, Student Politics in Argentina: The University Reform and Its Effects, 1918-1964 (New York: Basic Books, 1968), pp. 80-83, 90-115.

The Press

The Catholic press continued to fight liberalism and laicism. The Third Catholic Congress held in Córdoba in 1907 urged the diffusion of Roman Catholic ideas through the press. At the same time, the Catholic press began to expand, as a result of journalistic activities of clerics and laymen. In 1911, the magazine Estudios was started by Jesuits; it became rightist after the death of one of its co-founders in 1925.²⁴ Acción Católica Argentina controlled directly or indirectly 700 publications, plus publishing houses such as Editorial Difusión.²⁵ Its official daily newspaper, El Pueblo, was anti-democratic, and during World War II was nearly black-listed.²⁶ A strongly Catholic layman Manuel Fresco, who as governor of the Province of Buenos Aires had implanted religious education in the provincial schools in 1936, was editor of the pro-fascist

²⁴Furlong, "Breve historia de la revista 'Estudios,'" Estudios, XLVII, no. 500 (December, 1958), 759; 761-62.

²⁵Overseas News Agency, "Memorandum on Argentina," Buenos Aires, February 24, 1944, p. 3. National Archives file no. 835.404/42.

²⁶Acción Católica Argentina forbade its members to read a pro-democratic magazine, Orden Cristiano. (Ibid., p. 2.)

Catholic daily newspaper Cabildo.²⁷ Another Catholic layman, Atilio Dell'Oro Maini, founded the magazine Criterio in 1928; in 1932 the hierarchy named Monsignor Gustavo J. Franceschi as its editor. This magazine best reflected the thoughts of the Argentine hierarchy, becoming, after Franceschi took it over, more ultra-nationalist and anti-liberal,²⁸ for the authoritarian views of many clerics and Catholic laymen were being reinforced by the fascist ideologies of Europe of the 1930's.²⁹

Acción Católica Argentina

Catholic laymen and progressive priests had organized leagues and associations after the 1880's like the Círculos de Obreros, Unión Demócrata Cristiana, and the Liga Social Argentina. All were impeded by a narrow and conservative hierarchy that either disbanded these organ-

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ James M. Byrne, "Catholic Influence on New Regime in Argentina," Summary of despatch no. 13193. Buenos Aires, December 14, 1943, p. 2. National Archives file no. 835.00/2228.

²⁹ Marysa Gerassi, "Argentine Nationalism of the Right: 1930-1946," Studies in Comparative International Development, Social Science Institute, no. 13 (St. Louis, Mo.: Washington University, 1965), 181-94.

izations or absorbed them.³⁰

In 1919 the Argentine hierarchy approved the statutes of its main apostolic organization, Unión Popular Católica Argentina, later to be called Acción Católica Argentina (ACA). It was modeled after an Italian organization which was conceived of as the clergy's secular arm.³¹ ACA came to be divided into four branches: the Asociación de Hombres de Acción Católica (AHAC), the Asociación de Mujeres de Acción Católica (AMAC), the Asociación de los Jóvenes de Acción Católica (AJAC), and the Asociación de las Jóvenes de Acción Católica (AJAC). A fifth branch was added in 1952--the Asociación de Profesionales de Acción Católica.

ACA was organized on the archdiocesan, diocesan, and parochial levels. On the archdiocesan level was formed a Junta Central in the capital, which was the seat of Secretariados Centrales: Económico-Social (founded 1934), Moralidad (founded 1935), Publicidad y Propaganda (founded 1937), Educación (founded 1947 and dissolved in 1963), and

³⁰ Auza, pp. 60-120.

³¹ Ibid., pp. 117-18; cf. Gianfranco Poggi, Catholic Action in Italy: The Sociology of a Sponsored Organization (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1967), pp. 50, 54, 217-19.

Defensa de la Fé (founded 1947).³²

Institutions such as Scouts Católicos Argentinos, Congregaciones Marianas, and the Confederación Argentina de Maestros y Profesores Católicos (founded 1936) adhered to ACA as affiliates and were assigned asesores or advisors who were clerics with the final word on any decision. Catholic students attending public schools were organized into federations which were either in the boys' or girls' branch (AJAC). Catholic students at Catholic schools were organized into Centros Internos and also belonged to the branch of their sex in AJAC. Catholic university students could join the Federación de los Centros Universitarios of ACA; these federations and centros were headed by ecclesiastical advisors.³³

A United States Embassy despatch from Buenos Aires considered ACA to be the most important Catholic group wielding political influence in Argentina in 1943.³⁴ Indeed, ACA did attract numbers. AHAC with 4,048 members in

³² Interviews with civilian administrators of ACA, R. Díaz and J. Iglesias, Buenos Aires, August 18 and 21, 1972.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Byrne, "Catholic Influence," p. 3.

1933 had an index of growth of 201 to total 8,161 members by 1943; AMAC had 5,177 members in 1933 and 15,061 by 1943, a growth index of 290; AJAC (girls) had 7,150 members in 1933 and 22,871 by 1943, a growth index of 319; and AJAC (boys) had 3,831 members in 1933 and 12,407 by 1943, a growth index of 323. There were also preparatory sections founded in 1935 for little girls and boys, numbering over 7,000 and 6,000 members respectively, plus sections of future members numbering 10,000 men and 13,000 women.³⁵

From the very beginning, ACA pressured for religious education in the public schools. AHAC chose religious education as its campaign topic for 1933.³⁶ The Junta Central of ACA heard a paper in 1934 that described the laic school as "atheistic" and "contrary to the national Constitution." The Junta voted in favor of "reclaiming as a right the establishment of religious education for all orders of official teaching."³⁷ In 1938 the ACA organized its members to

³⁵Faustino Aranguren, "Datos estadísticos," Boletín de la Acción Católica Argentina, XXI (April, 1951), 169-70.

³⁶"Respuesta de la Acción Católica Argentina al cuestionario de la Oficina Pontifica, 'Actio Catholica,'" Boletín de la ACA, XVII (November, 1947), 307.

³⁷Campobassi, Ataque y defensa del laicismo escolar en la Argentina, 1884-1963 (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Gure, 1964), p. 27.

lobby in Congress against the Coll bill, which would have maintained and extended the neutrality of the public schools in religious matters. ACA won this battle and went on to organize in 1939 a Segunda Semana Nacional de Estudios Sociales, held in Buenos Aires as the opening phase of another campaign to install religious education in public schools, and to make private schools independent of state control.³⁸ ACA's theme for 1939 for its congresses and assemblies was "La Educación Cristiana," based on the papal bull "Divini Illius Magistri."³⁹ In 1942 the ACA again took as its campaign topic the theme of religious education in the state schools.⁴⁰

The ACA, it must be recalled, was reflecting the opinion of the Argentine hierarchy. In turn, the episcopacy was acting generally in accord with the policies and objectives favored by the papacy itself. ACA's activities were to bear fruit in 1943 when an ACA member, Martínez Zuviría, became the national Minister of Education and decreed the

³⁸ Mercedes Terrén, "La ACA en la educación argentina," in 30 años de Acción Católica, 1931-1961, ed. Manuel N. J. Bello (Buenos Aires: Talleres Gráficos de Don Rudecindo Sellares, 1961), pp. 190-91.

³⁹ "Respuesta de la ACA," Boletín de la ACA, p. 306.

⁴⁰ Overseas News Agency, "Memorandum on Argentina," p. 3.

reintroduction of religious education into the regular class hours of the national schools.

Religious Education in Provincial Schools

Before moving on to the topic of religious education in provincial schools, a few words must be said in regard to the state of provincial education. Education had been left to the provinces by the Constitution of 1853, but they lacked the funds to establish an outstanding system of primary schools. The provinces needed to receive national subventions for their schools, a procedure begun in 1871, but "the logical tendency of national authorities to place funds, teachers, and efforts in areas where obstacles seemed less staggering, robbed the interior of any fair share in Argentina's educational campaign."⁴¹ In provinces such as Salta, Santiago del Estero, and Jujuy, less than 50% of school-age children attended any school in 1914, in contrast to the more than 60% who attended schools in the Province and City of Buenos Aires.⁴² Though great strides were made toward wiping out illiteracy from 1868-1890, efforts

⁴¹

James R. Scobie, Argentina: A City and a Nation (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 154.

⁴²Ibid.

slackened from 1890-1930.⁴³ According to the 1940 census, 30% of school-age children did not attend primary schools.⁴⁴

The Socialist Américo Ghioldi pointed out in 1942 that the provinces received only 4,530,000 pesos in 1918 (the budget of 1917 gave them about this amount out of a total of 26,531,228 pesos for all primary education⁴⁵) from the national government, and, as of 1942, they were still receiving a small amount. Ghioldi proposed that the national subvention of provincial schools be increased in order to guarantee provincial teachers 75% of the salary of national schoolteachers.⁴⁶

Although the provinces received national subventions for their schools, many of them implanted religious education through provincial laws, decrees, and reglamentos. Salta, for example, passed a law in 1886 which made the

⁴³ Gianello, "La enseñanza primaria y secundaria," Historia argentina contemporánea, II, p. 155.

⁴⁴Speech by Américo Ghioldi, DSCD 1941, II, p. 638.

⁴⁵Argentina, Ley del presupuesto general, 1917 (Buenos Aires: Talleres Gráficos del Ministerio de Agricultura, 1917), pp. 486, 528.

⁴⁶DSCD 1942, I, pp. 700, 702.

teaching of the Roman Catholic religion obligatory. Córdoba followed suit in 1896, calling for the teaching of morality and religion.⁴⁷ A subsequent law in 1908 said that religious education should be given in schools to children whose parents or guardians did not object.⁴⁸ In Catamarca, an education law of 1900 allowed the province's Consejo de Educación to dictate a curriculum that would include the Catholic religion.⁴⁹ Santa Fé's legislature passed an educational law declaring the religious formation of children to be necessary. Schoolchildren would be taught morality and Catholic doctrine by a teacher if no cleric could do it.⁵⁰

When the legislature of Santiago del Estero passed a law implanting religious education in its schools, the CNE threatened to cut off national subventions to its schools, and the governor vetoed the law. However, the national Congress did not impose on the right of provinces to make laws for their schools. A bill of December 1914

⁴⁷Furlong, La tradición, p. 120.

⁴⁸Speech of Deputy Alfredo Palacios, DSCD 1914/15, VI, p. 684.

⁴⁹As of 1914, this law was not applied but neither was it repealed. (Ibid., p. 683.)

⁵⁰Ibid.

to cut off national subventions to provinces with laws permitting religious education in their public schools was defeated. It was pointed out by its sponsor that education was lay only in the provinces of Buenos Aires, Corrientes, Entre Ríos, Jujuy, San Luis, Mendoza, and La Rioja.⁵¹

In the 1930's the governing elites and military began to turn against the liberalism of the 1880's in reaction to the socio-economic crisis of the great depression and the challenge posed by new urban middle- and working-class groups. Their self-confidence shaken, despite their return to power, the Conservatives⁵² on the provincial and national levels turned increasingly to a romantic traditionalism, one of whose features was support of historic Catholicism.⁵³

In response to this new climate Buenos Aires implanted religion in its schools by a reqlamento of its Consejo General de Educación (1936). A national interventor de-

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 685, 691.

⁵²Conservative parties operated mainly on the provincial level and went by different names; only in the Province of Buenos Aires was there at one time a major party by that name. Here the term is a generic designation for the "oligarchy."

⁵³Henry Stanley Ferns, Argentina (London: Ernest Bonn Limited, 1969), p. 160.

creed religious education in the provincial schools of Catamarca (1937), and a governor of Mendoza made it an optional course in the provincial schools (1937).⁵⁴ In one way or another, between 1936-37 religious education was also implanted in the provinces of Corrientes, San Luis, La Rioja, and Jujuy.⁵⁵ It was also inserted in this period in provinces where it had previously existed but had later been eliminated: Santa Fé, Córdoba, and Salta.⁵⁶ Hence, the most populous provinces in Argentina had religion being taught as part of the regular curriculum in the provincial schools.

Small wonder, then, that a 1940 pastoral of the Argentine bishops applauded those who had worked to conserve a "Christian education" in the provincial schools, besides reminding Argentine Catholics that religious education was still a goal of the church.⁵⁷ The church's influence on the elite was helping it achieve a Catholic curriculum in

⁵⁴Furlong, La tradición, pp. 121-22.

⁵⁵Campobassi, Ataque y defensa del laicismo, p. 36.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 36.

⁵⁷"Pastoral del Episcopado Argentino Sobre la Educación Cristiana," June 29, 1940, quoted in Revista Eclesiástica del Arzobispado de Buenos Aires y del Obispado Sufragáneo de Azul, XL (July, 1940), 385-98. (Hereafter cited as the Revista Eclesiástica de Buenos Aires.)

public schools.

Church Built Its Own School System

The Generation of 1880 was active in the field of primary education, and national schools proliferated. In 1885, one-fourth of all primary students were attending private schools;⁵⁸ it may be assumed that three-fourths of them were Catholic. By 1937, only 7.5% of Argentine primary students were in private schools; the overwhelming majority were evenly divided between provincial (46.2%) and national (46.6%) primary schools.⁵⁹ In fact, from 1908 to 1938 the number of primary schools had doubled, the number of students had tripled, and the number of teachers had quadrupled.⁶⁰ This expansion was the result of Congressional and Executive action: Ley Láinez and financial support for national schools and teachers.

But by no means had the church given up on spreading its own school system in the face of state activity. At the same time that it began to organize lay groups such

⁵⁸Demaria, p. 28.

⁵⁹Alejandro E. Bunge, "Reflexiones acerca del regimen educacional--constataciones numéricas," La enseñanza nacional (Buenos Aires: Espasa Calpe Argentina, 1940), p. 149.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 152.

as Acción Católica, and at the same time that clerics and laymen founded a Catholic press, the bishops founded the Consejo Superior de Educación Católica (CONSUDEC). All church-administered schools, parochial or religious, were made dependent on CONSUDEC in 1922, their statutes being dictated by the Argentine episcopacy. The goals of CONSUDEC were to orient, coordinate, inform, and, if necessary, to defend all Catholic schools.⁶¹

The church decided to concentrate on the establishment of secondary and normal schools, and to leave the primary schools chiefly to the public sector. In 1918, one out of five secondary students was enrolled in private schools; in 1943, more than two out of five secondary students were studying in private schools.⁶² (It is assumed that three-fourths of these private schools were Catholic.) In 1918, 13% of Argentina's normal school students were enrolled in private normal schools; in 1943, this percentage had increased to 66%.⁶³ Almost all of the private normal schools

⁶¹Information in a letter to the author from Hermano Septimio, the head of CONSUDEC, Buenos Aires, March 19, 1974.

⁶²Di Tella, "Raíces de la controversia educacional argentina," Los fragmentos del poder, p. 314.

⁶³Ibid.

were Catholic. The church was assured of reaching the children of the middle and upper classes by concentrating on secondary school students. And the church was molding the teachers of primary schoolchildren by operating more normal schools, thereby reaching more primary school pupils indirectly.

Ley 934 of 1877 only mentioned secondary schools, stipulating that private secondary school students would have to submit to state examinations given by the national colegios; left outside of this law were private normal schools.⁶⁴ Thus the graduates of Catholic normal schools did not have to submit to state administered examinations in order to receive state recognition of their diplomas or certificates. Catholic normal schools faced no legal obstacles, therefore, and increased in number faster than the national ones. By the early 20th century Argentina had a surplus of primary school teachers;⁶⁵ while the state and provinces moved to slow down the growth of their own normal schools, the church kept on increasing its number of normal

⁶⁴Ghioldi, Libertad de enseñanza, p. 89.

⁶⁵The CNE in 1920 projected a surplus of 25,000 primary schoolteachers by 1930 if present growth rate were maintained. (Deputy Juan F. Cafferata, DSCD 1927, II, p. 294.)

schools.

The church's school system was also aided by the state. The national government and some provinces gave subventions to private schools. In 1938 the federal government spent thirty million pesos on private schools out of a total education budget of 310 million pesos; 211 million went to the national schools, and sixty-nine million went to the provincial schools.⁶⁶ In 1928, President Hipólito Yrigoyen and his Minister of Education permitted private secondary schools to waive the final national examinations required by Ley 934 for those pupils who achieved a high grade-point average, thereby lifting state control over private secondary school certificates. The result was an immediate upsurge in the number of private secondary schools operating more like businesses than academic centers.⁶⁷

The church's growing number of schools was abetted by the state's lack of action on the secondary (and normal) school level. No state bureaucratic interest group developed to promote secondary education as one did on the primary level because Congress failed to pass a law creating a

⁶⁶ Bunge, p. 148.

⁶⁷ Ghioldi, pp. 97-98.

Consejo Nacional de Enseñanza Secundaria.⁶⁸

There were few national secondary schools in the provinces; in 1900 there were only sixteen. In this same year, there were 3,609 secondary students in the national colegios and 3,272 secondary students in private schools in all of Argentina.⁶⁹ The national government was leaving secondary education up to the provinces, but they did not have the money, and, in fact, were closing down some normal schools in 1900 because of lack of funds.⁷⁰ What the national government did do, however, was to commit resources for non-bachillerato secondary schools, beginning commercial schools (1890), industrial schools (1897), and special schools for the deaf, dumb, and blind. In 1903 Congress approved a law creating an Instituto Nacional del Profesorado which graduated teachers especially for the secondary schools.⁷¹

⁶⁸There were many attempts throughout the 19th and 20th centuries; for one example, see DSCD 1894, pp. 528, 1205.

⁶⁹Deputy Alejandro Carbó, DSCD 1900, pp. 1180, 1269.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 1180.

⁷¹Gianello, pp. 120-23, 126-30, 140-44.

The Universities: 1884-1943

Presidents Mitre through Roca promoted education because they deemed it important for Argentina's social, economic, and political development, and they saw the university as the pinnacle of Argentine education. During the period of lay reforms of public education, President Roca's government (1880-86) defined the relationship of Argentina's national universities to the federal government by sponsoring the Ley Avellaneda (Law 1597). The law governed the universities from 1885 to 1967 except for an interruption during the Peron era, 1947-55. As originally passed, it gave the university a juridical status known as "limited autarchy": the university could decide its own regulations and basic norms and administer its internal finances. Under this law the national universities had the exclusive right to grant professional titles. Their autonomy was limited, however, in that the President of Argentina appointed professors on the basis of nominations of the superior council of the university; the national executive could also remove professors from their posts; and the legislative and executive branches annually approved the university budgets. Changes in university statutes had to be

approved by the President of Argentina.⁷²

At the time the Ley Avellaneda was passed, the only national universities were those of Buenos Aires and Córdoba, which had come under federal control during the period of national reorganization. Subsequently, other institutions were added to the national system. La Plata was originally planned as a provincial university, but in 1905 was turned over to the Nation and soon functioned as a national university.⁷³

Santa Fé originally had a Jesuit colegio with a law faculty that awarded degrees recognized by the two national universities, 1875-1884. In 1890 this colegio became part of the provincial university of Santa Fé, and in 1919 it was nationalized by Yrigoyen as the University of the Litoral and included former institutes in Rosario, Paraná, Corrientes, and Entre Ríos. Tucumán was also a former provincial university which was nationalized (1921) after Reform statutes had been approved for it by President

Yrigoyen in 1920.⁷⁴ Cuyo was made the sixth national uni-

⁷² María Terrén de Ferro, "Educación: la universidad actual y su autonomía," Estudios, no. 496, XLVII (August, 1958), 460-61.

⁷³ Gran enciclopedia argentina, ed. Diego A. de Santillán, (8 vols., 1953-66, Buenos Aires: Ediar Sociedad Anónima Editores, 1963), VIII, p. 250.

⁷⁴ José Torre Revello, "Historia de las universidades

versity in 1939, growing out of various institutes in Mendoza.

La Reforma

All the national universities, in existence or that came into being from 1918-21, had their statutes written and approved by the national executive to incorporate the ideas of the "Reforma." This reform movement began at the national University of Córdoba in 1918 and was carried out by alumni, students, and professors. They wished to change the rigid university structure that allowed certain traditional families from Córdoba to monopolize professorships. As these families were generally conservative and Catholic, the struggle was also against the church and religious influences at the University of Córdoba.⁷⁵ The reform eventually spread to all Argentine universities and other Latin American countries, bringing a tripartite system of university government: alumni, students, and professors would govern the university under conditions of university autonomy--the state would not interfere in university life.

y de la cultura superior," Historia argentina contemporánea, 1862-1930 (Buenos Aires: El Ateneo, 1964), II, 188-90.

⁷⁵Richard J. Walter, Student Politics in Argentina: The University Reform and Its Effects, 1918-1964, pp. 39-77.

Other changes were that class attendance was no longer obligatory, examinations could be taken by students who did not attend classes, and professors' chairs were opened to other than the elite families' members.⁷⁶

The Reform reflected student attitudes and ways of thinking that would become characteristic: nationalism, idealism, rhetorical solidarity with the working class, support for social justice, and solidarity with youth in other Latin American countries. Moreover, a by-product of it was the creation of a national organization, the Federación de Universitarios Argentinos (FUA), to coordinate all of Argentina's student groups through pamphleteering, meetings, etc., and to make the students' weight felt in national politics--through meetings with the President and violence if necessary.⁷⁷

The Reforma, like lay education, was soon subject to a counter reformation. The government of Alvear intervened the universities of the Litoral and Córdoba and rolled back several of the Reformista renovations.⁷⁸ Reform-

⁷⁶ Maria Mercedes Bergadá, Argentine Survey S.J.: II--Situación educacional (Buenos Aires: Centro de Investigaciones y Acción Social, 1968), Part 2, pp. 249-50.

⁷⁷ Walter, pp. 55-60, 77.

⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 80-83.

ists again suffered setbacks after 1930. Ironically, they had worked to bring about the overthrow of Yrigoyen by military coup in 1930, even though he had restored many of the reforms to the universities; but they soon came to regret their contribution to his overthrow. Under the military dictatorship set up in 1930 and the fraudulently elected Conservative coalition to which it gave way in 1932 (the "Concordancia"), most of the universities were intervened, and the administrators and professors opposed to the Re-⁷⁹
formista program replaced those of more liberal tendencies. Governmental repression of students led to their increasing politicization. Marxist groups grew in strength, as did certain extremist groups of the right. But the main body of university students identified with the democratic parties (and with the Allies at the outbreak of World War II). The principles of the Reform remained only as ideals during the years 1930-43: and their university centers and federations became foci of opposition to the national government.⁸⁰

⁷⁹The Second National Student Congress that met in Buenos Aires in 1932 voiced opposition to the Concordancia and demanded that the church not interfere in political affairs. (Gabriel del Mazo, ed., La reforma universitaria [La Plata: Edición del Centro de Estudiantes de Ingeniería, 1941], II, 370-90.)

⁸⁰Walter, pp. 90-115.

Catholic Universities Blocked

The anti-conservative and anti-clerical bias of the Reform made Catholics more conscious of their own failure to found a Catholic university. Various attempts had been made before: in 1871 a bill submitted to the Buenos Aires provincial legislature by Estrada was defeated; it would have allowed private universities to grant scientific degrees, but not habilitating titles to practice a profession unless the state approved.⁸¹ A Jesuit colegio in Santa Fé, as noted above, had obtained approval of its law school graduates' degrees from the two national universities, 1875-84. But it was not until 1910 that the church hierarchy along with Catholic laymen founded the Universidad Católica de Buenos Aires. The state refused to recognize the degrees of the university's graduates, and it ceased to function around 1920-22.⁸²

Meanwhile, however, Catholic activists as early as 1910 had formed Centros de Estudiantes Católicos in the na-

⁸¹Horacio O. Domingorena, Artículo 28: universidades privadas en la Argentina: sus antecedentes (Buenos Aires: Editorial Americana, 1959), pp. 19-20.

⁸²This Catholic University had faculties of law and social science; Mons. Luis Duprat was rector. (Auza, Los católicos argentinos, pp. 73-74.)

tional universities; they included secondary as well as university students and alumni. Each Centro had an ecclesiastical advisor, and Tribuna Universitaria was published to propagandize their ideas and orient the movement.⁸³ At the same time, Catholic laymen organized the Cursos de Cultura Católica, in which Catholic professors met with students in informal seminars to teach them about Catholic culture and philosophy. The future Universidad Católica de Argentina grew out of these Cursos, as did the Ateneo de la Juventud, founded in 1934. Many of the participants such as Dell'Oro Maini, Tomás D. Casares, and Rafael Ayerza became active in Argentine intellectual life and were to use their influence to help the church achieve its educational aims.

⁸³The Tribuna Universitaria was edited by Dell'Oro Maini, in 1917. See Tribuna Universitaria, October, 1917, p. 103.

CHAPTER THREE

THE 1943 COUP AND ENSEÑANZA RELIGIOSA

The Military Government

On June 4, 1943, the government of Argentina was forcibly replaced by a new group of military leaders. This group identified itself with nationalist and Roman Catholic forces. Its revolutionary proclamation stated that one goal of the revolution would be "acercar a los niños a la doctrina de Jesucristo" and "educar a la juventud en el respeto a Dios."¹

Nationalist Catholics applauded this coup, and moved into governmental posts. Six days after the new government took office, Father Gustavo Franceschi wrote an editorial for Criterio which praised the actions of the armed forces and called the revolution "una racha purificadora del ambiente social." The "duty" of Argentines was to support this government.² In the next issue of Criterio appeared a letter from General Pedro Ramírez, who had become President,

¹ Campobassi, Ataque y defensa del laicismo escolar, p. 40.

² "Comentarios: la revolución," Criterio, XVI (June 10, 1943), 128.

openly thanking Franceschi and Criterio for their support. Franceschi replied by complimenting Ramirez for his "integral Catholic Christianity" and his proposal to seek social justice in the manner laid out in the papal encyclicals.³ General Ramirez also called on Cardinal Copello and told him that his government intended to lean heavily on the church for assistance.⁴ Ramirez had a cleric as his personal advisor, Father Roberto A. Wilkinson Dirube, who also was credited as being his speech writer.⁵

The Catholic militancy of the new government showed up in the field of education. The Minister of the Interior Héctor Bernardo, who headed a nationalist group professing to be followers of St. Augustine, issued an order for the intervention of the province of Tucumán. While the province was intervened, the provincial Minister of Education sent out a nationalist circular to all schools that called for the extirpation of liberal democracy. This was followed by the installation of enseñanza religiosa in the

³Franceschi, "Nuevas consideraciones sobre la revolución," Criterio, XVI (July 1, 1943), 200.

⁴Despatch no. 11024 from Ambassador Norman Armour to the Secretary of State. Buenos Aires, July 17, 1943, p. 7. National Archives file no. 835/1671.

⁵Ibid.

provincial public schools. The action of the Catholic nationalists in the public education system of Tucumán was a preview of what they would do in the national schools.⁶

The new Minister of Justice and Public Instruction, Gustavo Martínez Zuviría, was a member of ACA and an extreme Catholic militant who had written nationalist and anti-semitic novels under the pen name of Hugo Wast. In December 1943, he issued the decree by which religious education was implanted in the national primary and secondary schools; by religious education was meant the teaching of the Roman Catholic religion. The provincial governments followed suit and established religious education in their provincial public primary and secondary schools by local ordinance.

Martínez Zuviría named another Catholic militant, José Ignacio Olmedo, as President of the Consejo Nacional de Educación; he announced pro-clerical and nationalist principles upon assuming office on March 25, 1944. Two days later, Olmedo issued a decree suspending all primary schoolteachers, specialists, and administrators, pending

⁶Byrne, "Catholic Influence on New Regime in Argentina," Summary of despatch no. 13193, Buenos Aires, December 14, 1943, p. 1.

a review of their fitness. All continued in their posts until each individual case was decided, but the net effect was to put primary education safely in the hands of the clerics and nationalists.⁷

Martínez Zuviría directed the intervention of all the universities, except the University of La Plata, and ended student participation in university administration. He declared FUA and all its centers to be illegal and dissolved; FUA, however, continued to operate clandestinely.⁸ Pro-democratic professors and administrators were removed from office or resigned in protest. Ultra-nationalists and reactionary Catholics replaced them.⁹ The main university with over 90% of all Argentine university students was the University of Buenos Aires, whose interventor was Tomás D. Casares, a member of the Cursos de Cultura Católica, ACA, the organizing committee of the First Congress of Ibero-American Culture, the Club del Plata, and Con-

⁷Telegram from Ambassador Norman Armour to the Secretary of State. Buenos Aires, March 28, 1944. National Archives file no. 835.42/185.

⁸Despite government repression, university students managed to force the resignation of some reactionary professors and administrators. (Walter, Student Politics in Argentina, p. 123.)

⁹Walter, Student Politics in Argentina, pp. 121-22.

vivium.¹⁰ Other Catholics who belonged to some of these same organizations played a role in the University's intervention: Atilio Dell'Oro Maini, Interventor-Dean of the Law School of the University of Buenos Aires; and Rafael Ayerza, Interventor-Dean of the School of Science.¹¹

On May 4, 1944, Dr. Alfredo Baldrich succeeded Martínez Zuviría as Minister of Justice and Public Instruction. He, too, was a Catholic nationalist and appointed another Catholic nationalist as his subsecretary, Silenzi de Stagni.³ So was Jordán Bruno Genta, the former interventor of the University of the Litoral, who on June 6 became rector of the Instituto del Profesorado, the leading secondary school-teacher training center.¹² A course in religious education and morality had been added to its curriculum since the decree for religious education also applied to secondary schools. By such means, secondary education was brought

¹⁰Casares was named to the Supreme Court in 1944 and rose to be its president under Perón in 1946. He typifies these Catholic nationalists in that he sided with the church during its showdown with the government in 1955. (Interview with Casares, Buenos Aires, September 11, 1972.)

¹¹Byrne, pp. 4-5.

¹²Letter from Cultural Attaché Hayward Keniston to the Secretary of State, Buenos Aires, June 9, 1944, p. 6. National Archives file no. 842.6/15018.

increasingly under the control of Nationalist Catholics.

Catholic nationalists had carried out the educational policies of the new government and vice versa. General Edelmiro Farrell, who replaced Ramírez as President in February, 1944, summed up the government's educational activities on June 4, 1944: dangerous elements had been eliminated from the universities and the teaching profession generally; students would have no share in the government of the university, nor should they devote themselves to political problems. He explained the implantation of enseñanza religiosa as the "restoration of the rule of the National Constitution in the proper interpretation of its text and spirit."¹³

The government had sought the support of Catholic nationalists because it genuinely shared the church's values; there was a close identification between the military men and the church on the critical importance of order, hierarchy, authority, and tradition.¹⁴ When interviewed many years later, Colonel Enrique P. González, President

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Interview with José Luis Imaz, sociologist, Buenos Aires, December 2, 1971.

Ramírez' secretary and a key advisor in the government during its first phase, stated that the government had wanted to use the Catholic religion to fight leftist ideologies: communists and anarchists were seen as formidable foes who wished to destroy the family and take Argentina into an era of terrorism in order to establish a despotic regime. The communists especially wished to infiltrate youth, attacking the home and religion with their "ideas disolventes," which only could be combated with religious instruction of the young in the schools.¹⁵ The Jesuit historian Guillermo Furlong likewise claimed that enseñanza religiosa served to combat totalitarianism, especially of the Soviet brand.¹⁶

The military government already had support and did not need to woo the Argentine church, but it wanted the church's backing.¹⁷ And the church wanted the national government to implant religious education in the schools so that the young would know its teachings. The church also managed to eject other religions from the public schools.

¹⁵ Interview, Buenos Aires, April 10, 1972.

¹⁶ La tradición, pp. 125-26.

¹⁷ Telephone interview with Robert A. Potash, Buenos Aires, July 14, 1972.

Law 1420 had allowed the ministers of other religions to teach their respective communicants. The 1943 decree was exclusionary--only the Catholic religion could be taught.

The Roman Catholic Church of Argentina now enjoyed:

. . . el control más o menos absoluto de las tres ramas educativas de la Nación por elementos católicos y clericales . . . el triunfo político más amplio de la Iglesia--la jerarquía--en el período.¹⁸

The Decree of Enseñanza Religiosa, December 31, 1943

Promulgation

On December 31st the Minister of Public Instruction

Dr. Gustavo Martínez Zuviría promulgated decree no. 18.411,

which said:

Artículo Primero.--En todas las escuelas públicas de enseñanza primaria, postprimaria, secundaria y especial, la enseñanza de la Religión Católica será impartida como materia ordinaria de los respectivos planes de estudio.

Quedan excluidos de esta enseñanza aquellos educandos cuyos padres manifiesten expresa oposición por pertenecer a otra religión, respetándose así la libertad de conciencia. A esos alumnos se les dará instrucción moral.

Art. 2^o.--Los docentes que tengan a su cargo la enseñanza de la Religión Católica serán designados por el Gobierno debiendo recaer las nombramientos en personas autorizadas por la Autoridad Eclesiástica.

¹⁸Alberto Ciria, Partidos y poder en la Argentina moderna, (1930-46) (Buenos Aires: Editorial Jorge Alvarez, 1968), p. 220.

Art. 3º.--Los programas y textos destinados a la enseñanza religiosa serán aprobados por el Gobierno, de acuerdo con la Autoridad Eclesiástica.

Art. 4º.--En los establecimientos de enseñanza media y especial dependientes de las Universidades Nacionales, así como en las escuelas comunes dependientes del Consejo Nacional de Educación regirán las disposiciones del presente Decreto.

Art. 5º.--Crease la Dirección General de Instrucción Religiosa a los efectos de organizar y dirigir esta rama de la Enseñanza en las escuelas dependientes del Ministerio de Justicia e Instrucción Pública y del Consejo Nacional de Educación, y la Inspección General de Instrucción Religiosa, cuyas funciones respectivas serán oportunamente reglamentadas por el Ministerio en cada jurisdicción, con el acuerdo o la consulta que, según los casos, corresponda hacer a la Autoridad Eclesiástica.

Art. 6º.--Los gastos que demande el cumplimiento del presente Decreto serán incluidos como ítem especial en el Presupuesto General de la Nación.

Art. 7º.--Communíquese, publíquese, anótese, dese al Registro Nacional y archívese.

RAMIREZ (signed)

Gustavo Martínez Zuviría, Luis C. Perlinger,
César Ameghino, Benito Sueyro, Diego I. Mason,
Alberto Gilbert, Edelmiro J. Farrell, Juan Pistarini.¹⁹

The decree was signed by all the ministers, giving it the force of law. A long preamble to it gave the government's reasoning for instituting enseñanza religiosa in

¹⁹Casiello, Iglesia y estado en la Argentina, pp. 336-37.

the public schools: a school system without religion had helped contribute to administrative corruption and "la deformación del alma del pueblo" because it had stripped Argentina of "el único fundamento válido de toda moral privada y pública y, para nosotros los argentinos, la destrucción de uno de los más fuertes vínculos de la unidad nacional."²⁰ It was also pointed out that a future Argentine President, since he was required by the Constitution to be Roman Catholic, should know the catechism.

Bishops Denied Collaboration

The episcopacy never admitted that it helped draw up this decree. Instead, it took the official position that the decree was unilaterally issued by the military; that the church had no hand in drawing it up; and that the bishops were even surprised by it.²¹ This does not mean that Catholics did not favor the decree. The bishops lauded it in a letter to President Ramírez, and in a pastoral letter: ACA praised it; Criterio enthusiastically greeted it; clergy, bishops and Cardinal Copello publicly and

²⁰Ibid., p. 335.

²¹See Franceschi, "La posición católica en la Argentina," Criterio, XVII (February 8, 1945), 133-40; Boletín de la Acción Católica Argentina, XXV (1955), pp. 55-62, quoted in Casiello, p. 338; and DSCD 1946, X, p. 690.

repeatedly praised the government because of its restoration of enseñanza religiosa.

It was reported that the church was well aware of this decree before it was issued and, in fact, had withheld its endorsement of the decree for several months out of fear of a negative public reaction to it. Minister of Public Instruction Martínez Zuviría purportedly overcame Cardinal Copello's qualms, and the decree was issued the end of December.²² Further verification that the church did know of this decree was supplied by President Ramírez' former secretary and chief advisor Colonel González, who stated that Martínez Zuviría periodically consulted the episcopacy while drawing up the decree for enseñanza religiosa.²³

After the promulgation of the decree, an article in Criterio reassured Catholics that the church would have a major part in administering the decree. The government could not impose its political will on the church because the teachers and texts had to be authorized by the eccle-

²²Letter from Counselor Edward L. Reed to the Secretary of State, Buenos Aires, January 8, 1944, p. 2. National Archives file no. 835.42/179.

²³Interview with Col. Enrique González, Buenos Aires, April 10, 1972.

siastical authorities. A Director General had to be consulted on the organization and administration of enseñanza religiosa, and a distinguished priest with firm character would be appointed with the concurrence of the hierarchy to this post to ward off chances that the government would dictate to the church.²⁴

The church was defensive in face of the charge that it had meddled in politics to get by force what it could not get by persuasion. The decree had been announced on the same day that political parties were ordered dissolved, thereby linking religious education with military dictatorship. The hierarchy maintained that they were not the only ones who favored religious education. They argued that it had been a demand of the people, a right of the church, and part of Argentine tradition; it was something the government was duty-bound to do by virtue of divine law.

El establecimiento de la enseñanza religiosa católica en las escuelas de un país no constituye un libre obsequio del gobierno a la Iglesia, sino el reconocimiento del derecho de Cristo a llevar, por medio de dicha Iglesia, su Verdad al alma de los niños.²⁵

²⁴Franceschi, "Un 'grave problema argentino' imaginario," Criterio, XVII (January 27, 1944), 83.

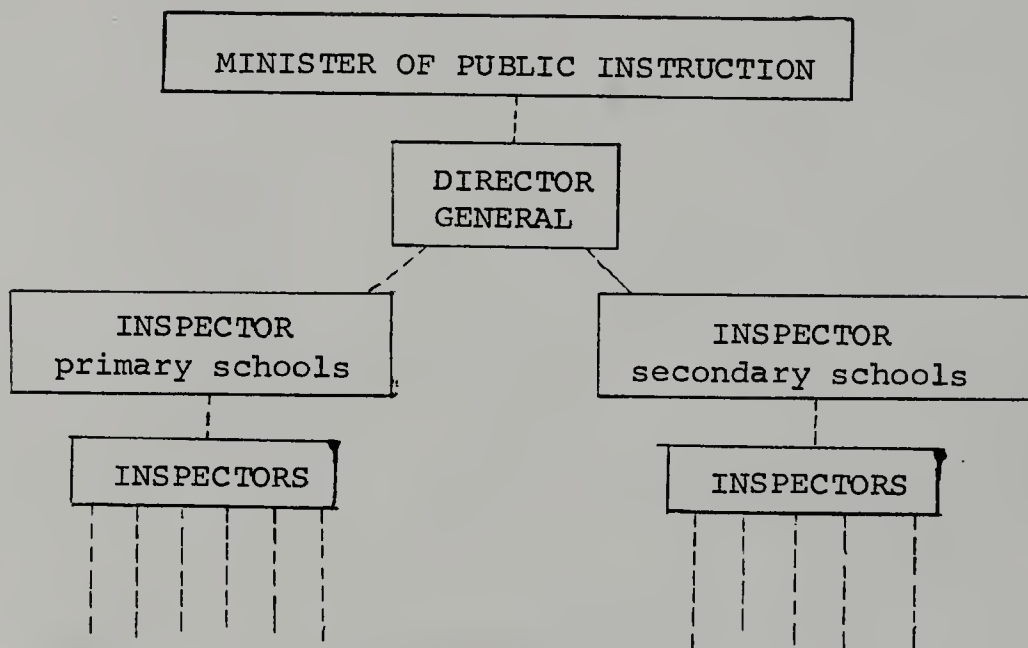
²⁵"Pastoral Colectiva del Episcopado Argentino Acerca de los Deberes de los Católicos en el Momento Actual," November 5, 1945, quoted in Criterio, XVIII (November 22, 1945), 497.

Administration of the Decree

That the bishops, or at least those familiar with their viewpoint, were almost certainly in on the drawing up of the decree is apparent in the text of the decree itself, whereby the Argentine episcopacy must decide on the texts and curricula and nominate the teachers for religious education. The episcopacy was also to be consulted by the government on the functions of the General Directorate of Religious Instruction (Dirección General de Instrucción Religiosa) and the General Inspection of Religious Instruction (Inspección General de Instrucción Religiosa).

The Director General was responsible for religion and morality in the schools. Underneath him were two head inspectors--one for the primary schools and the other for the secondary schools. The Director General's activities were regulated by the Minister of Justice and Public Instruction and were to be conducted in close consultation with the Church hierarchy. The chief inspectors, in turn, headed a staff of inspectors situated all over Argentina. These inspectors would visit the schools every week throughout Argentina, and mainly were to orient the teachers of enseñanza religiosa and morality. However, the Director

also tried to have a priest appointed for every school to serve as an advisor for the teachers of religion and morality.²⁶



The General Directorate was officially established by decree on May 20, 1944, although the first Director General was appointed in March to set up the office. It was composed of four members plus the Director General, all of whom were nominated by the government, and a sixth member appointed directly by the episcopacy. It thus epitomized

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Interview with Pbro. Dr. Jesus E. Lopez Moure, Second Director General, 1944-47, Buenos Aires, August 9, 1972.

collaboration between church and state on public education.²⁷

All of the Directors were clerics. The first, Juan R. Sepich, lasted two months, March-April, 1944. He was succeeded by Father López Moure, who directed the program of religion and morality in the schools from April 1944 to April 1947. The hierarchy approved books for use in the teaching of morality and religion before they were finally screened by the Directorate. They were checked by the bishops for doctrinal errors; the Directorate checked them for their suitability in the classroom. The hierarchy approved the teachers of religion and morality if their diplomas and titles showed them to have had formal training in Roman Catholic dogma. The Director reviewed the list and passed it on to the Minister of Public Instruction (for secondary and normal schools) or to the CNE (for primary schools), who then appointed them to teaching positions within the schools. The CNE was appointed by the Minister of Public Instruction, who in turn was appointed by the Chief Executive.

When the program began, there were few teachers prepared to teach religion and morality, and the Directors,

²⁷L. Edward Shuck, Jr., "Church and State in Argentina," Western Political Quarterly, II (December, 1949), 438.

therefore, used graduates--mainly clerics--of the Instituto de Cultura Religiosa Superior and an institute run by the Benedictines in Belgrano. Meanwhile Directors Sepich, and later Moure, pressured the bishops to begin training courses in the dioceses for future lay and clerical religion and morality teachers. Teachers were certified to teach these classes in secondary schools only if they passed an examination, written and oral, made up and administered by the individual bishop of the diocese.²⁸ The training courses consisted of three years of dogma, morality, sacred literature, church history, ascetic theology and mysticism, liturgy, philosophy, and sociology. At the end of three years, a teacher of morality or religion would be awarded a certificate recognized by a diocesan bishop.²⁹

On the primary level, the training and selecting of teachers was handled in a different way. There, volunteers were sought among the regular elementary teachers to teach morality and religion. This was because the religion con-

²⁸ Interview with López Moure, Buenos Aires, August 9, 1972.

²⁹ Around 1949 a Corporación de Profesores de Religión y Moral was founded with an ecclesiastical advisor appointed by the bishops. (Luis R. Capriotti, "Documentos: los católicos, el profesorado de religión y de moral y la ley 12.978," Criterio, XXII [June 9, 1949], 310.)

tent of the courses was simple enough to be handled by a volunteer, and there were already so many teachers in the primary schools that additional ones to teach religion and morality would have added excessively to the numbers.³⁰

However, the church did act to ensure that its religious doctrines were taught by lay teachers. Priests or inspectors who were priests were sent to the schools twice a week to give one-half hour training courses to the volunteers.³¹

Texts and curricula.--In 1944 the only books available as textbooks for enseñanza religiosa were catechisms. Pages were mimeographed from these catechisms and distributed along with religious pamphlets to the classes. By 1948, however, there was a published series of books for individual grades that followed the church-approved curricula.³²

³⁰ A decree of November 28, 1944, issued by the Consejo Superior de Ministros with the collaboration of the Directorate General of Religious Education stated: "Enseñarán Religión los mismos maestros en sus respectivos grados; si algún maestro no se creyere capacitado hacerlo . . . será reemplazado en esta signatura por la Dirección General de acuerdo con las Autoridades del Consejo Nacional de Educación." (Quoted in Gustavo J. Franceschi, "El problema de la enseñanza religiosa," Criterio, XVIII [July 26, 1945], 81.)

³¹ Interview with López Moure, Buenos Aires, August 9, 1972.

³² Enseñanza religiosa: programas aprobados por el poder ejecutivo de la Nación (Rosario: Editorial "Apis," 1948), p. 2.

Under the first Director General experienced teachers of catechism drew up the curriculum for the first two years of primary school and secondary school. The lack of money and teachers of religion initially impeded religion from being offered in the other grades. Two years of morality or religion had to be passed by secondary students in order to graduate. Later on, the curriculum for religion and morality was drawn up for all grades. These curricula, too, were submitted to the episcopacy for their approval.³³

For the primary grades, enseñanza religiosa consisted of Doctrine (faith and law) and Sacred History (Old and New Testament). On the secondary level--national colegios, liceos, escuelas normales, comerciales, y industriales--enseñanza religiosa was more specialized. In general, Faith was offered the first year of secondary school, Law the second year, Sources of Grace the third, History of the Old and New Testament the fourth, and Social Doctrine of the Church the fifth year. But these course varied somewhat according to the type of school: normal schools offered a course on the Teaching Profession of the Church in the fifth year; professional and technical schools taught

³³Interview with López Moure, Buenos Aires, August 9, 1972.

History of the Old and New Testaments in the third and fourth years in lieu of Sources of Grace and Social Doctrine of the Church.³⁴

The texts and programs used to teach religious education were similar to the ones used for religion classes in the church schools. Dr. López Moure explained the small difference between religion texts used in the public and private Catholic schools in a 1945 circular:

Que la única diferencia que poseen con los programas oficiales es que los mismos temas se tratan con mayor amplitud, consecuencia lógica de ser institutos de formación integral religiosa.³⁵

If parents asked that their children be excused from classes of enseñanza religiosa, their children would be enrolled in the alternative course of morality. But a content analysis of the texts used for morality reveals that they hardly differed from those used for enseñanza religiosa. The morality texts taught the Roman Catholic viewpoint of man, God, society, family, and civil authority. They taught that the only true, legitimate, and valid marriage between Christians was between baptized persons

³⁴Enseñanza religiosa, pp. 5-6, 22-48.

³⁵"Circular No. 32," Buenos Aires, November 7, 1945, quoted in Criterio, XVIII (November 22, 1945), 501.

married with the sacraments of the church. Adultery, free love, and prostitution were denounced.³⁶ Hobbes' and Rousseau's theories of civil society were denigrated as false; St. Thomas of Aquinas' views were presented as good. Liberalism was denounced as an erroneous doctrine.³⁷ Humility was a virtue achieved by submitting to the will of God. Remedies for pride were the recognition of God as the Sumo Bien and Suma Bondad, and the recognition of reality as God, neighbor, and society.³⁸

These morality textbooks would also have had to contain nothing contrary to Catholic teaching because they were subject to the approval of the Argentine episcopacy, just as were the texts of religion.

Critiques of the Administration of Enseñanza Religiosa

The hierarchy's role in making up curriculum and approving teachers and textbooks meant that any shortcomings or violations of the decree of religious education could

³⁶ Miguel Angel Etcheverrigaray and Alberto Franco, Moral, libro IV para 4^o ano de la enseñanza media (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Itinerarium, 1951), pp. 129-34.

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 170-78, 205.

³⁸ Etcheverrigaray and Franco, Moral, libro II para 2^o ano de la enseñanza secundaria (1949), pp. 143-44.

be attributed to the church as well as to the government. When criticism was leveled at the disruption of regular classes by the addition of religion and morality courses, the Church was not directly criticized. But, however oblique the criticism, church spokesmen and groups took it upon themselves to answer the charges, since the church was responsible for these classes.³⁹ The government itself also disciplined those who were critics or potential critics of religious education courses in the public schools. Dr. Manuel Villada Achával suspended the rector E. F. Rondanina of the Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires for writing an article that criticized enseñanza religiosa.⁴⁰ The church was purportedly in on the arbitrary dismissal of public school rectors and teachers, including a large number of Jews.⁴¹ Father Franceschi did not wholly deny this charge but claimed that members of the clergy intervened to save many in 1944-45.⁴²

³⁹"Comentarios: diligencia por una parte y caballer-
osidad for otra," Criterio, XXIII (February 25, 1950), 113.

⁴⁰Oswaldo Francella, "Comentarios: el Profesor Ron-
danina," Criterio, XVII (April 27, 1944), 393.

⁴¹George P. Doherty, "The Cross and the Sword: A
Catholic View of Argentine Nationalism," Harper's Magazine,
CXC (June, 1945), 110.

⁴²Gustavo J. Franceschi, "La posición católica en la
Argentina," p. 138.

Clerical teachers of religion were found ill-prepared and inept by their critics. Priests in the secondary schools teaching religion, a Protestant American living in Buenos Aires charged, were improvising as teachers, unable to handle increasingly dissatisfied students with inconvenient questions.⁴³ A Peronist priest claimed post-1954 that the hierarchy violated the intent of the decree by nominating priests instead of laymen for secondary teachers of religion.⁴⁴

The religious education program was also scored by the United States Cultural Attaché in a private letter for teaching ideas of an authoritarian nature. Religion and morality classes taught that civil authority came from divine authority and thus, implicitly, that political obedience was required by God.⁴⁵ Along this same line, the General Directorate of Religious Instruction asked that in classes of enseñanza religiosa the teachers explain to the

⁴³ George P. Howard, "Clericalism in Argentina's Crisis," The Christian Century, LXII (October 17, 1945), 1184-85.

⁴⁴ Pedro Badanelli, Perón, la iglesia y un cura (Buenos Aires: Editorial Tartessos, 1960), p. 77.

⁴⁵ Letter from Cultural Relations Attaché Keniston to the Secretary of State, Buenos Aires, June 9, 1944. National Archives file no. 842.6/15018.

students that:

el fundamento solidísimo de la autoridad de los propios padres, es la representación de la autoridad divina, representación que se extiende, también, al maestro, y se agranda en la autoridad civil, necesaria para el ordenamiento de la vida de relación sobre la tierra, y que culmina en la autoridad eclesiástica, como orientadora de la vida del hombre hacia su destino supremo y definitivo.⁴⁶

Thus, church and state were acting in concert to instill concepts about the sacredness of the church-state relation and their institutional infallibility.

Critics charged that the church wanted all classroom textbooks, instruction, and teachers to conform to its religious teachings. This accusation could not be denied by the church since this is what it indeed wanted.⁴⁷ Critics pointed to a 1945 circular signed by Father Alberto Escobar, Inspector General de Enseñanza Religiosa, as proof for their charges. In this circular, he told schools to apply Roman Catholicism to the teaching of all subjects: for example, history should consider Christ as the center of world his-

⁴⁶"Circular," June 3, 1944, Boletín del Ministerio de Justicia e Instrucción Pública, VII, no. 52 (June, 1944), 853.

⁴⁷Octavio Nicolás Derisi, "El fin último y los fines inmediatos de la educación católica," Criterio, XIX (December 19, 1946), 583.

tory; in writing class, students should copy "yo amo a Dios" or "quiero ser buen cristiano." A "unified" school was the goal: "En la escuela unitaria, el maestro puede enseñar religión juntamente con las demás materias."⁴⁸

This circular went on to recommend that religion classes begin with prayer and the sign of the cross and that trips be taken to temples and sanctuaries to explain Roman Catholic dogma and symbols,⁴⁹ giving rise to more charges that the intent of the decree of 1943 was being violated. The point is perhaps arguable, but Colonel Enrique González later agreed that religion classes were not meant to be religious services but theoretical and historical in their treatment of religion.⁵⁰

Detractors pointed out the intolerance built into the religion and morality classes. First of all, the textbooks were biased against other religions and civil laws. One such text, La religión explicada by Ardizzone, scorned Protestantism as sustaining "principos que conducen a la

⁴⁸Critics of this circular were Deputy Alberto Candiotti, DSCD 1946, X, p. 693; and Campobassi, Ataque y defensa del laicismo escolar, pp. 48-49.

⁴⁹DSCD 1946, X, p. 693.

⁵⁰Interview with Col. Enrique González, Buenos Aires, April 10, 1972.

immoralidad y al crimen."⁵¹ The Manual de instrucción religiosa, a text provided by the CNE, attacked civil marriage and the lay school, although both had been sanctioned by national laws.⁵² Secondly, pressure was put on students not to opt for the morality classes, even though they hardly differed from the religion classes. Students who left the classroom to attend them were often jeered by their classmates and called "Jews";⁵³ parents had to take the initiative in requesting that their children not be enrolled in religion but in morality classes and often would not bother or be too intimidated to go to the school authorities with this request;⁵⁴ and students graduating from secondary school faced difficulties, it was charged, if they had taken morality instead of religion.⁵⁵

Church spokesmen countered almost all of the above charges by insisting that morality was an accepted alterna-

⁵¹DSCD 1946, X, pp. 696-97.

⁵²Deputy Cipriano Reyes, DSCD 1946, X, p. 776.

⁵³Interviews with former students of morality, Buenos Aires, 1972.

⁵⁴Deputy Absalón Rojas, DSCD 1946, X, p. 705.

⁵⁵Ibid.

tive to religion; therefore, the program was tolerant and optional. The church denied that its priests were inept and constantly maintained that it had the divine mission to teach its doctrine in the public schools. But the administrators of the enseñanza religiosa program did lessen the obstacles to parents who wished to withdraw their children from religion classes. A ruling in 1944 allowed parents of elementary schoolchildren to excuse them from religion if they appeared in person before the district school council and signed a special register to that effect; in 1945 parents had only to send a letter. By 1945, secondary students could excuse themselves from religion on their own initiative.⁵⁶

In general, the church sought to answer its critics by pointing to the enrollment figures for religion classes. From 1943 to 1955, 91.1% of registered students studied religion instead of morality, meaning that a little less than 9% opted for morality.⁵⁷ To church spokesmen this was proof that Argentines wanted their children to study religion and that Ley 1420 had not reflected the wishes of

⁵⁶Franceschi, "La posición católica en la Argentina," p. 137.

⁵⁷Furlong, La tradición religiosa en la escuela argentina, p. 126.

the people.⁵⁸ (To many critics, this was proof that the church was part of the coercive apparatus of the dictatorial state.)

The Catholic nationalists who seized power in June of 1943 had indeed carried out their promises to purify the teaching profession and bring Catholic values into the schools. The church had worked closely with them to assure that its doctrines would be properly taught on all school levels and that morality would not deviate too much from the Catholic catechism. Thus, every Argentine school pupil was now exposed to Catholic religious teaching, unless enrolled in a Protestant or Jewish school.

⁵⁸ Ibid.; and Casiello, La iglesia y el estado en Argentina, p. 340.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ALLIANCE BETWEEN PERON AND THE CHURCH:

1943-54: PART I

Government Religious Policy

The government that came to power in 1943 sincerely desired to revamp and strengthen the state's bureaucratic structure, cope with difficulties caused by World War II, and promote the diversification of the national product. But the most lasting work of this military government was in the social order, due to Juan Perón, who became head of the Secretaría de Trabajo y Previsión Social in 1943. Colonel Perón secured the future of two million workers by giving them retirement benefits from the state; he also set up special courts for workers' disputes which revolutionized labor-management relations; and he obtained a decree on professional associations which institutionalized the labor union movement in Argentina.¹

Besides using the carrot to carry out its goals the government also used the stick. Labor union leaders who

¹Félix Luna, El 45 (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sud-americana, 1973), pp. 31-32.

did not cooperate with Perón, especially the Communist ones, were removed from their posts and imprisoned.² University professors who signed a democratic manifesto in October of 1943 were removed from their jobs; over 300 teachers were dropped from the schools; the public administration was purged; radio waves were systematically used for governmental propaganda for the first time in Argentine history; political parties were suppressed and many of their leaders went into exile; the press was censored; and the government supported the Axis powers until the United States threatened economic sanctions and Allied victory appeared certain.³

This government also garnered the support of the Catholic church. Besides decreeing enseñanza religiosa and appointing militant Catholics to education posts, the government took other steps to promote the church, mainly by obstructing its supposed competitors, the Protestants or Evangélicos. In 1945 the government softened the harsh-

² Robert J. Alexander, "Argentine Labor Before Perón and Under Perón," in Why Perón Came to Power, ed. Joseph R. Barager (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), p. 189.

³ Luna, El 45, pp. 37-38.

ness of some of its measures in religious as well as educational and political aspects of Argentine life, only to reimpose them with greater severity after Perón was elected President in 1946.

Protestants, Jews, Spiritists, and other non-Catholics comprised a population of more than one million according to the 1947 census: 310,633 were Protestants, 249,326 were Jews, 239,949 were "without religion," 114,589 had no declared religion, 66,217 were Greek, Russian, Syrian and Armenian Orthodox, 18,764 were Muslim, and 2,129 were of other Christian faiths.⁴ The governmental restrictions applied to them after the June 1943 revolution were the result of church propaganda and politicking against the non-Catholics, of whom the Protestants were the chief target. They were applied because the government agreed with the church's pretensions and/or for political reasons; and behind this pro-clerical military government was Perón.⁵

As was discussed in Chapter Three, discrimination against non-Catholics began when enseñanza religiosa was imposed on the national schools. It was soon extended to

⁴Santiago Canclini, Los evangélicos en el tiempo de Perón (Buenos Aires: Editorial Mundo Hispano, 1972), p. 182.

⁵Ibid., p. 68.

the provincial schools, and even to private schools by means of circulars from the Directorate General of Religion and Morality. The Jesuit Sepich, as head of the Directorate, sent "Circular No. 8" on March 18, 1944 to the Instituto Evangélico Americano instructing the school that:

. . . en principio debe anotarse en la clase de religión a todos los alumnos de su establecimiento.⁶

Thus, Catholic heads of governmental agencies even tried to spread Catholic catechism to Protestant schools. This circular was successfully resisted by the Protestant schools, and the new Director General López Moure eased up on them.

This collaboration of state and church was evident in further restrictions on non-Catholics attempting to limit their proselytizing, which was largely a Protestant endeavor. A pastoral of the bishops warned in January 1944 that:

El derecho que tienen los protestantes y disidentes a que se les respete en el ejercicio de su culto y a que no se les persiga, no les da derecho a hacer proselitismo entre los católicos.⁷

In February 1944 a bishop from Córdoba blasted Protestant

⁶Ibid., p. 283.

⁷"Carta Pastoral del Episcopado Argentino," January 25, 1945, quoted in Canclini, p. 37.

influence in Argentina, especially among the poor, and called upon the government to stop it.⁸ Soon thereafter, the police forbade certain meetings of Protestant groups in towns in Córdoba, only to have these decisions reversed by the federal interventor when the national press decried this abridgement of religious liberty.⁹

Other restrictions soon followed: as of February 18, 1945, all Protestant radio broadcasts were suspended. They were allowed before the presidential election of 1946, only to be suspended again from May 1949 to Perón's fall in 1955.¹⁰ In 1944 the military government set up military Zonas de Seguridad in Formosa, Chaco, Misiones, Entre Ríos, Corrientes, Patagonia, Córdoba, and Buenos Aires provinces in the parts where Indians resided. As early as 1946 the government made it difficult for Protestant missions to acquire land in the Chaco, and by 1951 it became clear that the Protestant churches and missions would be forbidden to acquire property, move, or build in these zones.¹¹ Decree 15.498

⁸ Mons. Buteler, "Los pastores protestantes frente a la Constitución Nacional," El Pueblo, February 11, 1945, quoted in Canclini, pp. 42-43.

⁹ Canclini, pp. 44-45.

¹⁰ Canclini, pp. 85, 314-15.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 138-45.

of August 1953, forbade any religion except Catholicism to convert the Indians in these zones, and a Comisión Interministerial was set up to administer it. Protestant protests, plus the ensuing falling out between Perón and the church, vitiated the enforcement of this decree, yet it was not abrogated until June 1957.¹² Another decree that proved baneful to non-Catholics was one of 1946 that created a Register of non-Catholic sects and demanded they submit information as to the date their organizations appeared in Argentina, the creed professed, the names of their authorities, plus their nationality, their extraconfessional activities, the location of their temples, the number of their members, and the zones where they met. This decree was protested by every non-Catholic group in Argentina, and the Senate refused to approve it, but after two years of respite, it was revived in October 1948, substituting the term "Fichero" for "Registro"; this was done while the Congress was in recess so that non-Catholics could not appeal to Congressmen to vote down the decree. Several Protestant Slavic churches were closed down under the pretext that they had not filed this data, and other churches were fined for holding meetings on the ground that all religious meet-

¹²Canclini, pp. 169-70.

ings had to be registered with the local police. It was not until 1958 that this decree was modified.¹³

While non-Catholics were facing harassment from Peronist government officials, the Catholic church was receiving increasing support as the official religion sustained by the state. Before Perón came to power, the bishops each received 500 pesos yearly from the state; Perón upped this support to 5,000 pesos per year.¹⁴ The church also received state aid for its social work. A 1947 statute, that will be discussed in Chapter Five, subsidized salaries of the teachers in private schools. Perón's government also built seminaries for the church, lowered the cost of electricity for its secondary schools, and helped the church financially in many other ways.¹⁵

Religious Education Becomes Law

Presidential Election of 1946

The government's support of catechism in the public schools was of crucial concern to the bishops. On January

¹³Canclini, pp. 183-206, 208-13, 241-42, 246, 251.

¹⁴Esteben Peicovich, Hola, Perón (Buenos Aires: Jorge Alvarez, 1965), pp. 38-39.

¹⁵Pedro Badanelli, p. 31.

10, 1944, the Junta Central de la Acción Católica, officially representing all Roman Catholicism as the apostolic arm of the bishops, sent a note to the President of Argentina:

V. E. y su gobierno merecen bien de la Patria por la clarividencia y decisión con que han sabido restituir a la niñez argentina su auténtico patrimonio, devolviendo a Cristo a nuestra escuela y nuestra escuela a Cristo.¹⁶

The then-power behind the throne, Juan Perón, soon emerged as a candidate for the presidency in the elections of 1946. Peron and his coalition of political parties were actively supported by individual priests on the grass roots level.¹⁷ And in the midst of the 1945-46 election campaign the cardinal and bishops issued a pastoral stating that no Roman Catholic could affiliate with parties or vote for candidates supporting the following programs:

- 1) the separation of church and state;
- 2) the abolition of legal dispositions between church and state recognizing specifically the rights of religion and particularly the religious oath as provided for office-holders;
- 3) "el laicismo escolar" (meaning a repeal of the existent decree providing for compulsory religious education in the schools); and

¹⁶ Boletín de la ACA, XIV, no. 261 (1944), quoted in Casiello, p. 337.

¹⁷ Shuck, "Church and State in Argentina," p. 539.

4) the legalization of divorce.¹⁸

The pastoral further demanded from Catholics a support of "unity" and "social justice," favorite phrases of the Peronists.¹⁹ An Argentine Catholic who heeded the above pastoral could not vote for the Democratic Union, Radical Party, Socialist Party nor Communist Party because all had platforms in favor of one or more of the above programs.

Perón himself recognized the church's support when he wrote in exile:

Mi movimiento a diferencia de otros era ideológicamente cristiano, tanto lo era que por diez años consecutivos el clero argentino desde su más alta jerarquía al más humilde cura de campaña, apoyó al peronismo, tanto en sus campañas electorales como en su gestión partidista normal en el gobierno.²⁰

But this support was given after some hesitation.

The bishops were mainly from the upper class or tied to the upper class, and the upper class was mainly against Perón and had attracted Monsignor Miguel de Andrea to head Catholic opposition to Perón and support the Democratic Union. Until 1945 Cardinal Copello resented Peron and had a per-

¹⁸ "Pastoral Colectiva del Episcopado Argentino Acerca de los Deberes de los Católicos en el Momento Actual," p. 497.

¹⁹ Shuck, p. 539.

²⁰ Juan D. Perón, Del poder al exilio (Panamá, 1958), quoted in Canclini, p. 66.

sonality conflict with him because he thought Perón expressed a Nietzschean morality in a 1925 pamphlet Moral militar written for the Manual del aspirante. Copello forgot these differences when he and some bishops informally visited Perón the beginning of November, right before they wrote the pastoral on the election, according to Dr. Arturo Enrique Sampay, who made the negotiations for this visit.²¹ These differences were forgotten when Perón presented himself as a candidate who had kept the masses from becoming Communists, had taken part in the government which had established religious education in the schools, and repeatedly had declared himself a fervent believer--Perón publicly made acts of faith in different Catholic sanctuaries and declared Nuestra Señora de la Mercedes the patron of the Army.²²

There were two bishops in particular who advocated that the church should collaborate with Perón, Monsignor Nicolás de Carlo of Reistencia in the Chaco and Monsignor Antonio Caggiano of Rosario in the Province of Santa Fé, later made a cardinal in 1945. They were soon joined by

²¹Luna, El 45, pp. 48, 64.

²²Ibid., pp. 48, 409, 453.

the Archbishop of Salta, Monsignor Roberto Tavalla.²³ Monsignor Caggiano viewed Perón as an opportunity for the church to achieve what it wanted and is purported to have said "esta es nuestra oportunidad, no debemos perder el tren."²⁴

There is a widespread belief that Peron promised the hierarchy that he would support the decree for enseñanza religiosa if he were elected president in exchange for the church's support of him in the elections.²⁵ Such an agreement between the church and Perón would have been oral, but Perón did commit himself in writing to two Catholic nationalists who seem to have sought his promise on their own initiative. The Jesuit Leonardo Castellani and the editor of the nationalist Catholic newspaper Tribuna went to see Perón on February 18, 1946, to solicit a promise from him on the decree; he promised in a five paragraph statement that he would ratify the decree if elected, and even expand enseñanza religiosa ("acrecentarla"), which hinted at making

²³ Statement of the ex-Jesuit Leonardo Castellani to Gambini, cited in Hugo Cambini, El peronismo y la iglesia (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de America Latina, 1971), p. 15. Castellani was a Jesuit and member of the rightist group, Alianza Libertadora Nacionalista (ALN), known as the aliancistas, which used strongarm tactics in the street and disrupted Protestant and anti-Peronist meetings while shouting "Cristo Rey." (Canclini, p. 278.)

²⁴Gambini, p. 15.

²⁵ See, e.g., Canclini, p. 265.

the decree a law since all decrees would be subjected to congressional purview.²⁶

But the strongest disagreement with the argument of benevolent neutrality on the part of the church toward Perón is found in the opposition's reactions to the pastoral and their contention that the church did favor Perón.

Opposition to Religious Education in the Public Schools

The decree of enseñanza religiosa had been seen from the outset as a cruel blow by the Protestants, and especially the Baptists and Methodists who strongly advocated the separation of church and state. The Baptist leader Santiago Canclini and the Methodist pastor Julio M. Sabenes became leaders in the fight to abrogate the decree for religious education. In a speech delivered on May 25, 1944, Canclini

²⁶Castellani and Durañona published Perón's vow the next day on the first page of the Tribuna, and Castellani was fired shortly thereafter from his job as teacher of catechism in the Normal School of Salta by the Archbishop of Salta. Evidently, the bishops wanted to keep quiet their compromise with Perón and/or to appear neutral. (Gambini, p. 15.)

This declaration of Perón was circulated extensively right before the elections, probably by his opponents as well as his proponents. The key paragraph stated: "He jurado escuchar y satisfacer los anhelos del pueblo argentino que por mayoría abrumadora quiere para sus hijos la enseñanza religiosa, he de mantenerla y acrecentarla con el mayor empeño ya que responde a una intensa convicción de mi espíritu." (Tribuna, Rosario, February 19, 1946, p. 1, quoted in full in Canclini, p. 281.)

averred that the lay school as provided by Ley 1420 assured freedom of conscience and free inquiry, warded off atheist and religious fanaticism, and was in accord with the spirit of the Constitution.²⁷ The Baptist newspaper El Expositor Bautista published detailed instructions to parents on how to withdraw their children from classes of enseñanza religiosa. They were to show a Christian attitude, but write courteous letters to school officials asking their children to be excused.²⁸

The Protestants--Baptists, Methodists, "Free Brothers," Unión Evangélica, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Lutherans, Waldensians, Mennonites--were joined by the Jews in a petition calling for an end to religious education. The Delegacion de Asociaciones Israelitas Argentinas (DAIA)²⁹ was the chief authoritative body for Jewish organizations,

²⁷Speech given on May 25, 1944 in the Baptist Church of the Center of Buenos Aires. Printed and issued in pamphlet form as Por que los cristianos evangélicos defendemos la escuela laica (Canclini, p. 282.)

²⁸El Expositor Bautista, XXXVII, no.8., August, 1944, pp. 267-69, quoted in Justice C. Anderson, Church-State Problems Among Baptists in Argentina in the Light of the Historic Baptist Perspective (dissertation presented to the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, 1965, pp. 57-58.)

²⁹DAIA must be distinguished from the Organizacion de Asociaciones Israelitas (OIA) which was practically a po-

institutions, and congregations, and conducted Jewish negotiations with the state; it always supported the Protestants on issues of religious liberty.³⁰

Lay groups that supported the lay school were mainly teachers' associations and a group founded by Socialists, *Asociación Pro Defensa de la Escuela Laica*. -A group of distinguished educators founded the *Asociación Campaña Pro Defensa de la Ley 1420* in 1946. The *Federación de Maestros de la Provincia de Buenos Aires* and the *Asociación de Maestros de Santa Fé*, in Argentina's two most populous provinces, went on record as opposed to religious education and in favor of the lay school.³¹

Religious education was also opposed by the newspaper *La Prensa*, the leading spokesman for the liberal wing of traditional upper class Argentina.³² *La Vanguardia*, the newspaper of the Socialist Party, deplored the decree for religious education. Socialists were joined by Radicals

litical branch of the Peronist Party and was created and inaugurated by Peron in 1948. It did not represent the Argentine Jewish community as it claimed. (Canclini, *Los evangélicos en el tiempo de Peron*, p. 302.)

³⁰Canclini, p. 111.

³¹*Ibid.*, pp. 264, 266, 276, 279.

³²*Ibid.*, p. 267.

and Progressive Democrats and Communists in support of the
 lay school.³³

On February 24, 1946, Perón was elected president of Argentina by 55% of the males who voted: the Democratic Union received 45% of the more than three and one-half million votes cast.³⁴ Perón immediately submitted all the decrees promulgated by the military government since 1943 to the newly elected Congress for ratification as laws. The Senate approved them all, but the Chamber of Deputies separated out from this lump package three decrees, one of them the decree for enseñanza religiosa, to be considered separately. Perón kept his promise to the Catholic church and gave it his full backing, meaning that the Peronists who controlled Congress because of their majority would back it, but it was not taken up by the Chamber of Deputies until March 1947.³⁵

The opponents of religious education saw hope in

³³Nobody expected the Communists, Socialists, and Progressive Democrats to give up being in favor of divorce and lay education because of the 1945 pastoral. (Luna, E1 45, p. 409.)

³⁴Ibid., pp. 459-69.

³⁵Canclini, p. 281.

this delay for re-establishing the lay school in accord with Ley 1420. In August 1946, Canclini wrote and published a book entitled Sarmiento: defensor de la escuela laica (Buenos Aires: Junta Bautista de Publicaciones, 1946) and sold it on the streets. Several vendors were beaten up by aliancistas of the ALN. Copies of this book were sent to members of Congress and to government officials.³⁶ On September 24, 1946, a rally was held, featuring speakers from several evangelical denominations: out of this rally came a petition which solicited the derogation of the decree for enseñanza religiosa. It was sent to the President of the Committee on Public Instruction of the Chamber of Deputies.³⁷ In December 1946, the Asociación Campaña Pro Defensa de la Ley 1420 held a Congress of Lay Education which was attended by educators and others opposed to religious education.³⁸

While the opposition to religious education in the public schools was building up support for its point of view, the Chamber of Deputies was preparing to debate the

³⁶Anderson, p. 150.

³⁷Canclini, pp. 276, 281-82.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 279-80.

issue. The Protestants had sent their September petition to the committee preparing to report on the bill, and had also sent to each deputy a copy of Canclini's pamphlet Por qué los cristianos evangélicos defendemos la escuela laica.³⁹

Catholic Action.--Simultaneously Acción Católica Argentina mounted a campaign to assure the ratification of the decree. Along with denunciations of Sarmiento and Ley 1420, it denounced the Juntas pro Enseñanza Laica for attacking the religion of the majority. It argued that all other subjects were taught in schools, so religion should be included. On March 5, 1947, ACA and other Catholic groups organized a march up the Avenida de Mayo from the Cathedral on the Plaza de Mayo to the national Congress building. They went inside and met with the deputies to advocate the passage of the bill for enseñanza religiosa⁴⁰ and to present the following plea to the Chamber:

Este decreto exige que las escuelas a las cuales acuden los católicos sean católicas, no sólo porque la enseñanza religiosa tenga su sitio decoroso entre las asignaturas de estudio, sino también porque el conjunto de éstas, así como los maestros, reglamentos y textos, estén im-

³⁹ Ibid., p. 282.

⁴⁰ Campobassi, Ataque y defensa, p. 57.

pregnados de espíritu religiosa.⁴¹

The Deputies Debate, March 1947

One hundred and two Peronist deputies⁴² confronted forty-four Radicals in the Chamber of Deputies during the debate on the decree-law; there were also two deputies each from the Independent Laborite, National Democrat, and Laborite parties,⁴³ and one Progressive Democrat.

The Peronist deputies argued that Argentina had a Roman Catholic tradition. Deputy Alvarez Vocos of Córdoba stated that the Argentine people must return to their Christian traditions and oppose foreign ideas, and let spiritual values shape Argentine youth as they did before.⁴⁴ Deputy César Joaquín Guillot of the Federal Capital reminded all that enseñanza religiosa had always existed in Argentina in provincial schools and that other advanced countries such as France permitted religious education to be taught

⁴¹Speech by Deputy Santander, DSCD 1946, X, p. 867.

⁴²There was no Peronist Party until after the 1946 election, formed from the Laborites, Intransigent Radicals, and Independent Laborites. (Luna, E1 45, p. 509.)

⁴³Peter G. Snow, Argentine Radicalism: The History and Decline of the Radical Civic Union (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1965), p. 112.

⁴⁴DSCD 1946, X, p. 826.

during school hours.⁴⁵ Deputy Montiel of the Province of Buenos Aires said the constitutional requirement to convert the Indians to Roman Catholicism meant that enseñanza religiosa was obligatory, and, furthermore, the president and vice-president were required by the constitution to be Catholics. Thus, the citizenry must be educated to fill the highest offices of the land.⁴⁶ Deputy Colom of the Federal Capital stated that "we" (Peronists) are going to establish enseñanza religiosa so that it is not taught in early morning hours when the pupils are still sleepy.⁴⁷

The Peronists also counterattacked the opposition's arguments by claiming that the decree had worked out well. The Minister of Justice and Public Instruction Dr. Belisario Gache Pirán spoke on behalf of the decree. He refuted the Radical charge that religious education was "anti-pedagogical" by observing that graduates of religious schools do well in Argentine life, that religious schools are respected and that few countries prohibit them. He repeated the old adage that enseñanza religiosa would not be oblig-

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 849-50.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 602.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 718.

atory for non-Catholic children. He denied abuses: students studying morality were not excluded from examinations given in Normal School no. 4, all textbooks would not be revised to reflect the Roman Catholic viewpoint, and the decree had been applied with tolerance since Russian Orthodox priests had been granted permission to teach their religion in school no. 19 in Misiones and in school no. 179 in the Chaco as of November 1945.⁴⁸ Deputy Valdez of Tucumán cited statistics to show that teachers were happy to teach enseñanza religiosa. Only 1.85% of the teachers in the federal capital and .99% in the provinces had asked to be exempted.⁴⁹

The Opponents.--The Radicals accused the majority bloc of Peronist deputies of being indecisive about this decree and of only going along with it because Perón had made a political commitment to the church.⁵⁰ Deputy MacKay warned that the Catholicization of the masses by official force and not by apostolic force might create a religious fight that was non-existent and could explode as in Mexico or Spain.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 860, 865-66.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 791.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 810.

⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 760-61.

Deputy Sobral stressed that clericalism was neither the Roman Catholic church nor the Roman Catholic religion. Clericalism was militant politics seeking temporal power, a converse religion taking advantage of the totalitarian state in order to impose itself upon Argentina. He went on to lament that the 1943 decree surrendered an essential part of state education to a private entity--the church: the church could intervene in the selection of teachers of religion.⁵² Deputy Emilio Ravignani insisted, on the other hand, that the state was using the church rather than the other way around, in order to establish a totalitarian state on the Spanish pattern. He warned that the church would lose its independence as well as the respect of many Argentines and should not convert itself into a political instrument to prop up strongman regimes. He argued that, when both church and state seek absolute power, they will confront each other and that the church always loses.⁵³

A further argument reflected on the merits of Ley 1420, which had proven a good law and was part of Argentine tradition. The Radical minority on the committee to report

⁵² Ibid., pp. 607, 611-12.

⁵³ Ibid., pp. 628, 637-38, 645.

out the bill had voted to table it because they upheld laicism. The Unión Cívica Radical (UCR) looked upon the Argentine people as forming a lay political community and it, therefore, favored laicism in education. The Radicals were not against any religion but thought that a religious conscience developed best in a spiritual climate of laicism. From the vantage point of philosophy and pedagogy laicism was wise: a democratic state saw education as preparation for individual responsibility; therefore, education should be independent of spiritual authorities who seek intellectual domination. Laicism permitted the development of a common conscience, and the democratic school was tolerant.⁵⁴ Deputy Candiotti concluded that the Argentine tradition was being perverted by this decree-law.⁵⁵

Several speakers chided the clergy for never having really taken advantage of opportunities for religious education provided by previous law. One sarcastically asked if the hours of the former law were inadequate for the child or priest, and if the priests had stopped giving lessons under Ley 1420 because they were gratuitous or because they

⁵⁴Ibid., pp. 604-06, 608.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 691.

wanted to create a climate adverse to the law?⁵⁶ Dellepiane thought that the priests had stopped teaching religious education because they wanted to be able to say that the lay school was atheistic.⁵⁷ Deputy N. Rojas speculated that the church was worried that increased immigration of non-Catholics would result in their taking advantage of Law 1420 and teaching their religion in the public schools. He concluded that the church must have another motive: it wanted not only primacy but exclusivity in religious education.⁵⁸ Like the deputies above, Santander could not understand why the church wanted to destroy Ley 1420; it did not interfere with the annual subsidy given to the church by the state--three hundred million pesos--nor did it keep the church from founding more normal schools than the state.⁵⁹

The destruction of Ley 1420 meant to the Radicals the violation of principles of freedom of religion and conscience. Since June 4, 1943, Argentine Catholicism has been in league with a military dictatorship. Deputy Candiotti

⁵⁶ Speech by Deputy Candiotti, ibid., p. 638.

⁵⁷ DSCD-1946, X, p. 638.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 810

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 590-92.

sarcastically observed that the church hierarchy was doing nothing to stop the street demonstrations attended by priests to agitate for enseñanza religiosa, and asked why they did not stop them if, as had been suggested, the church had had nothing to do with the issuance of the decree?⁶⁰ Deputies A. Rojas, Sobral, MacKay, and Candiotti gave examples of the dictatorial application of the decree and its violations of conscience, ostracism of students studying morality, Catholic textbooks which upbraided civil laws, etc.⁶¹ Deputy N. Rojas argued that Roman Catholicism was just one ingredient in contemporary civilization, and that education should be oriented to convey to students the whole thing, not just this one part. Spirituality is not Catholicism, and religiosity existed before Catholicism.⁶²

The Socialists were not represented in the Chamber of Deputies but made known their point of view through public statements and their newspaper La Vanguardia. On the eve of the Chamber's vote on the decree, the Executive Committee of the Socialist Party held a rally in Plaza Once

⁶⁰Candiotti also observed that the clergy had entered the schools accompanied by the sound of military boots. (DSCD 1946, X, pp. 689-90.)

⁶¹Ibid., pp. 620, 695, 705, 866.

⁶²Ibid., pp. 807-08.

to speak against it and in favor of lay education and Ley 1420. The Party's head warned that the church was linking itself to a corrupt dictatorship:

Tendremos catecismo en la escuela al mismo tiempo que el maquiavelismo corruptor hace su curso en el gobierno, en el Congreso, en las legislaturas, en la administración, en⁶³ la política, en los sindicatos dirigidos.

Also, the Acción Laica Argentina organized a popular demonstration in Plaza Once on March 5, 1947, to propagandize for lay education. This group had been organized by prominent Socialists in 1936 to defend Ley 1420.⁶⁴

Deputy Mario Mosset Iturraspe was the only representative of the Progressive Democratic Party in the Chamber of Deputies. This Party had been ably led by Lisandro de la Torre and was agrarian and reformist, with its strength based in the Province of Santa Fé. Deputy Mosset agreed with the Radicals that all this hullabaloo was the result of a corrupt, fraudulent and reactionary regime influenced by reactionary European circles. He further agreed with the Radicals that Ley 1420 had served Argentina well for sixty-two years, and that the schools had been organized

⁶³Américo Ghioldi, "Acto del Partido Socialista en favor de la enseñanza laica," La Prensa, March 15, 1947, p. 9.

⁶⁴Campobassi, Ataque y defensa, p. 57.

under it to be humane, pacific, tolerant, free, equal, and without privileges and dogma. The state should be neutral in religious matters, and the constitutional requirement that the president be Roman Catholic did not mean that fourteen million Argentines should be taught Roman Catholic dogma.⁶⁵

Cipriano Reyes spoke for the Laborite Party; not only was he a national deputy, but he also headed the Meat Packers Union and had been first Vice-President of the Laborite Party's Executive Committee during the election when the Party supported Peron for president. He had been crucial in rallying the workers to demonstrate for Perón's return in October 1945, when Perón had been arrested and jailed on the island of Martín García.⁶⁶ Thus, for Reyes to speak out against a Peronist measure was a sign of independence from Perón within the labor movement.⁶⁷ Deputy

⁶⁵ DSCD 1946, X, pp. 685-86.

⁶⁶ Luna, El 45, pp. 66, 334, 396, 451.

⁶⁷ Reyes resisted the merger of the Laborite Party with the Intransigent Radical Party and the Independent Laborites to form the Partido Unico de la Revolución Nacional, and later renamed Partido Peronista. He fought Perón for two years, and was jailed in 1948 when his term in Congress expired, only to be released when Perón was overthrown in 1955. (Robert J. Alexander, "Argentine Labor Before Perón and Under Perón," Why Perón Came to Power, pp. 191, 197.)

Candiotti had already noted that no worker had taken part in the noisy demonstration on behalf of the decree-law.⁶⁸

Reyes noted that Argentine organized labor had generally supported the lay school and respected all religions in their public declarations.⁶⁹ He pointed out that on March 1, 1947, the official magazine of the Confederación General del Trabajo (CGT), by then the privileged labor organization of Argentina, published an article on religious education for its more than one million members, who were mostly Peronists. The article maintained that workers opposed enseñanza religiosa as undemocratic because all religions had their rights. Labor unions had always fought for freedom of conscience and lay schools. It concluded that "Los trabajadores están en la obligación necesaria de defender a sus niños de una enseñanza dogmática."⁷⁰

Furthermore, Reyes continued, at the height of the debates on religious education, the Unión Sindical Argentina⁷¹ sent a note to him "in the name of 110 affiliated

⁶⁸DSCD 1946, X, p. 690.

⁶⁹Ibid., pp. 770-76.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 775.

⁷¹Its most important affiliates were the Telephone Workers' Federation and the Maritime Workers' Union. At the time of the 1943 Revolution it was one of four central

syndicates." The Unión Sindical Argentina opposed the im-
 plantation of enseñanza religiosa in the schools: Ley
 1420 was sound morally and pedagogically; the spiritual
 formation of men in non-Roman Catholic nations was of a
 high quality; the teaching of religious education reflect-
 ed a retarded concept of the social question which might
 result in a bad influence on the next generation of Argen-
 tine workers.⁷²

Reyes declared that the working class had always
 viewed the Catholic Church as its enemy, and that laws to
 better the material and moral well-being of all working-
 men, i.e., social security and social justice for agricul-
 tural workers, were more important than a law for religious
 education. Even though he was a Peronist he would vote
 against this bill for religious education in public schools.⁷³

The debate was declared over on March 14, and a vote
 was taken on the decree for religious education: it was
 approved by 86 votes in favor to 40 against.⁷⁴ The Cham-

labor organizations, along with FORA and two rival CCT organ-
 izations, one Socialist and one Communist-influenced. (Al-
 exander, "Argentine Labor Before Perón and Under Perón," p.
 184.)

⁷²DSCD 1946, X, pp. 775-76.

⁷³Ibid., pp. 770, 773.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 887.

ber then notified the Senate of its approval, and the Senate, which had previously approved it with little debate, sent it to the Committee on Constitutional Provisions which reported it out favorably on April 17, 1947. It was approved again by the Senate on that very day. The Executive Power promulgated it by decree on April 29 as Law 12.978.⁷⁵

With the passage of the law for enseñanza religiosa in 1947, Perón's government openly sealed its alliance with the church. Thus was a bond created which made Cardinal Copello hesitate to oppose Perón. An historical analysis of Perón's administration found religious education to be the most important factor in church-state collaboration during that time:

. . . la enseñanza religiosa seguía siendo el nudo donde se habían cruzado los lazos de amistad entre la Iglesia y el Gobierno. . . .⁷⁶

⁷⁵Campobassi, p. 77.

⁷⁶"Historia del peronismo: clero y gobierno," Primera Plana, V (November 1-7, 1966), 35.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE ALLIANCE BETWEEN PERON AND THE CHURCH:

1943-54: PART II

Gratitude of the Church

The archbishops and cardinals Copello and Caggiano formally called on Perón to express their thanks one day after the Senate approved the decree. Cardinal Copello said:

Antes de la últimas elecciones habíais prometido a los electores esta ley, y una vez proclamado primer magistrado de nuestra Patria, con una constancia y dedicación ejemplares, propiciásteis esta ley hasta verla felizmente sancionada por las Cámaras.¹

Perón answered Cardinal Copello's words with an exposition on the humanist and spiritual sense of his government, stating that it acted upon Christian social doctrine and affirmed justice, individual liberty, and Christian charity.² It is interesting to note that the church hierarchy thanked Perón and not the senators and deputies for making the decree a law.

¹"El episcopado y la enseñanza religiosa," Revista Eclesiástica de Buenos Aires, XLVII (May, 1947), 258.

²Ibid.

Even the Pope was grateful to Perón. Perón sent a letter to the Pope in April 1947, which discussed his political, social, and economic reorganization of Argentina. The Pope told Perón's personal representative after reading the letter how grateful he was to Perón for having ended atheism and laicism in the schools.³ In 1947 Perón's wife Eva Duarte was personally invited to Rome by the Vatican, and the Pope gave her a golden rosary.⁴

In Argentina, Cardinal Copello went out of his way on various occasions to appease Perón. After Agustín Luchía Puig of the Assumptionist order had sermonized against Perón and made criticisms of the government over Radio El Mundo, Copello pressured his order to send him out of the country in 1946. Puig had also been associated with the Catholic weekly Estrada along with other dissident Catholics--his brothers Félix and Luis Luchía Puig, Manuel Ordóñez, Moisés Alvarez Lijó, Eduardo Saubidet Bilbao, Héctor Gato, and Manuel Río. Copello sought to suppress this liberal weekly by prohibiting Catholics to read it "bajo pena de pecado grave," and by publishing in the bulletin of the Archbishop-

³ Ludovico García de Loydi, La iglesia frente al peronismo (Buenos Aires: C.I.C., 1956), pp. 55-56.

⁴ Ibid.

ric the warning that "Ese semanario no cuenta con la dispensa eclesiástica."⁵ Copello also called upon the priest of Liniers, Father Dumphy, in 1948, to convince him to leave his parish and take a trip abroad. Copello took this action after Perón had upbraided Copello and the bishops for not keeping an eye on the clergy, ending with the threat, "Tiene dos meses de plazo para eliminar al cura de Liniers, que sigue molestando."⁶ This conversation followed on the heels of the alleged plot to assassinate the Peróns for which three chaplains had been among those arrested.⁷ Father José María Dumphy refused to give up his post from which he had criticized Perón and Copello had him ejected from it in 1949 and defrocked.⁸

At the same time, Copello looked favorably on those priests who actively supported the Peróns and presumably gave his tacit approval to their activities. Father Hernán Benítez became Perón's personal ambassador to the Pope, while Evita was angling for her Papal medal, and later he

⁵ Gambini, El peronismo y la iglesia, pp. 35-36.

⁶ Ibid., p. 38.

⁷ See below, chapter 6, pp. 150-51, 160.

⁸ Gambini, pp. 37-40.

was made chaplain of the Eva Perón Foundation and Evita's personal confessor. (His brother, Leonardo Enrique Benítez de Aldama, was designated Subsecretary of Religion in the Ministry of Foreign Relations and Cult, while also acting as the General Director of Religious Education.)⁹ Father Virgilio Filippo was named the Adjunto Eclesiástico de la Casa de Gobierno, with rank equivalent to ambassador, in Perón's first administration. Copello gave permission to Filippo to stand for election in 1948 as a Peronist; he was elected to the Chamber of Deputies where he loyally served Perón, even when Perón fought with the church.¹⁰

There was only one exception to the generalization that the hierarchy supported Perón, and that was Bishop Miguel de Andrea. De Andrea was the founder and spiritual advisor of the Federation of Catholic Workers' Associations, a women's trade union in the Federal Capital. Politically, he was a democrat who outspokenly advocated freedom of speech and press. From the very beginning he opposed Perón's encroachments on union autonomy and freedom of expression. But de Andrea was trounced by Copello

⁹Ibid., p. 32.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 41-42.

in church circles, and the bishops decided to support Perón.¹¹ However, de Andrea's titular see was in the Near East, so that he could avoid signing the pastoral letters that favored the election of Perón and his supporters.¹²

During the Congressional election campaign of 1947-48 the Catholic hierarchy again issued a pastoral which was interpreted as supporting the Peronist candidates:

- 1) All persons are morally obligated to vote.
- 2) All voters must vote for candidates who appear "to be likely to secure the greater benefit for religion and the fatherland, even though they do not belong to your particular party, because public good is above party interest."
- 3) No Catholic may affiliate himself with a party or vote for a candidate whose program contains the principles enunciated ¹³by a pastoral₁₇ in the 1945-46 campaign.

Since Radicals, Socialists, Progressive Democrats, and Communists advocated the separation of church and state, plus laicism in the public schools, this pastoral letter, in ef-

¹¹Felix J. Weil, Argentine Riddle (New York: The John Day Company, 1944), pp. 8-9.

¹²Robert J. Alexander, The Perón Era (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951), p. 129.

¹³"Sobre las próximas elecciones emitió una pastoral el episcopado," La Prensa, December 31, 1947, p. 8.

fect, supported Peronist candidates.

Again, on August 1, 1951, when Perón was a candidate for the presidency, a letter from the Argentine hierarchy favored him and his party, repeating that Catholics could not support a political party's candidates if that party subscribed to laicism, separation of church and state, legal divorce, and the suppression of legal dispositions which recognized the rights of "Religion."¹⁴

Reaction of the Radicals

On August 24, 1951, the Unión Cívica Radical thought it necessary to state publicly its position on issues of concern to the church as a result of the church's pastoral letters. It also indirectly attacked clerical meddling in politics and concluded that Roman Catholics could be members of UCR. The Radicals' public declaration stated:

La UCR, a raíz de versiones circulantes puestas al servicio de la confusión, cree llegado el momento de dirigirse a los católicos argentinos y explicar, con toda claridad, su posición con respecto al catolicismo, para así evitar equívocos que desvirtúan su histórica trayectoria política.

La UCR se cuidó, con saludable tolerancia, para

¹⁴"Pastoral Colectiva Acerca de los Deberes Cívicos de los Católicos," August 1, 1951, quoted in Boletín de la ACA, XXI (July-August, 1951), 119.

que los deberes de su disciplina interna no afectasen, en momento alguno, las preferencias confesionales de sus afiliados. Es por eso que pudo acoger en sus filas y concertar alrededor de su esperanza a personas que tienen opiniones no coincidentales en materia religiosa.

Es notorio que en la Nación predomina una inmensa mayoría cristiana y católica. El radicalismo, en que se refleja la misma, nunca tuvo, en la oposición o en el gobierno, dificultades frente a la iglesia sostenida por el Estado.

Es público, asimismo, que su programa partidario no incluyó, entonces ni ahora, disposición alguna dirigida a provocar la separación de la Iglesia y el Estado o a instituir la disolución del matrimonio por la vía del divorcio. Y en cuanto al problema de la religión en la escuela, el radicalismo se jacta de haber proclamado la libertad de enseñanza con todos sus posibilidades útiles, de acuerdo con su histórica premisa de respeto por el hombre.

La UCR comprende que la Iglesia tiene que estar al margen y por encima de toda tendencia partidista que niegue los valores humanos, pero no entiende que la religión pueda profesarse con plenitud, prescindiendo del patriotismo. Por eso advierte que los gobiernos de tipo totalitario, al negar las esencias del hombre, malogran los sentimientos cristianos, y afirma que los católicos deban arrodillarse ante Dios, pero jamás ante tiranos.

La UCR ha creído oportuno dirigir estas palabras de información a todos los católicos que simpatizan con su causa, que es la del pueblo y la de todo ciudadano que quiera vivir en libertad y dignidad. Recíbanlas sus destinatarios como un cordial mensaje de solidaridad en la obscura noche por que atraviesa la República.

Buenos Aires, Agosto 24, de 1951.

Santiago del Castillo, presidente.

Luis R. MacKay y Ernesto Dalla Lasta, secretarios Alfredo Grassi, Domingo Cialzeta y Angel M. Lagomarsino.¹⁵

Educational Militancy of the Church

Acción Católica Argentina

In 1936, ACA had established the Confederación de Maestros y Profesores Católicos under the tutelage of Father Luis Correa Llanos. This union promoted religious education in the public schools and supported Perón because under his auspices religious education was officially offered in the public schools.¹⁶

The year that religious education became law, ACA set up two new Secretariados on the national junta level-- the Secretariado Central de Educación and the Secretariado Central para la Defensa de la Fé.¹⁷ Through the offices of the Secretariado Central de Educación, ACA hoped to maintain the gains of the Argentine Roman Catholic Church in the

¹⁵ "La Unión Cívica Radical y el catolicismo; declaración de la mesa directiva del comité nacional," DSCD 1958, VI, Appendix: Insertion No. 2, p. 4452.

¹⁶ Interview with Isabel Ruiz, Secretary-General of Federación de Agrupaciones Gremiales de Educadores (FAGE), and member of the Federación Católica de Maestros y Profesores, Buenos Aires, September 12, 1972.

¹⁷ "Repuesta de la Acción Católica Argentina al cuestionario de la Oficina Pontifica 'Actio Catholica,'" Boletín de la ACA, XVII (November, 1947), 289, 191

field of education. It would also act as an organizational base for extending Roman Catholic doctrines in the schools. This Secretariado is to be distinguished from CONSUDEC, or the Consejo Superior de Educación Católica, which was established by the Episcopacy in 1922 to coordinate, orient, and defend all the Catholic schools, which were made dependent on it.¹⁸ The Secretariado served more broadly defined ends, as provided by Article 3 of the Secretariado's statutes:¹⁹

- Art. 3^o-- a) Organizar y coordinar las actividades educativas católicas;
- b) Promover y fomentar en la sociedad el conocimiento, necesidad y sentido de la educación católica. (Enciclia "Divini Illius Magistri");
- c) Estudiar la legislación educacional, nacional y mundial;
- d) Seguir el movimiento educativo en materia de métodos y organizar encuestas y estudios;
- e) Vigilar las maniobras contrarias a los derechos divinos de la Iglesia en esta materias (organizaciones, doctrinas, nombramientos, proyectos, etc.);
- f) Hacer un estudio completo y mantenerlo al día (archivos, ficheros) de la obra educativa

¹⁸Letter from Hermano Septimio of CONSUDEC to author, Buenos Aires, March 19, 1972.

¹⁹Mercedes Terrén, p. 191.

católica nacional; su organización, sus actividades, su personal, su evolución, sus recursos, etc.;

- i) Clasificar los textos escolares (lectura, literatura, historia, ciencias, filosofía, etc.) de acuerdo a la doctrina católica y procurar la difusión de los autores ortodoxos;
- 1) Preparer y formar dirigentes en la materia, sobre todo, con vista al futuro.

JAC, or Jóvenes de Acción Católica, carried out campaigns under episcopal direction to teach secondary and university students the Catholic religion and to enlist their support for apostolic activities. Centros internos were set up in Catholic schools for this purpose and centros secundarios were formed in public schools, as were centros universitarios created in universities. But enrollment in these centers began to slack by 1950. Many disassociated themselves from these student groups in order to join Peronist youth groups or just lost interest in non-secular activities.

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In 1951, AHAC, or the men's branch of ACA, helped form the Liga de Padres de Familia (LPF), and the AMAC branch,

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Tiburcio Casal, "La A. C. y los colegios religiosos," in 30 años de Acción Católica, 1931-1961, ed. Manuel N. J. Bello (Buenos Aires: Talleres Gráficos de Don Rudecindo Sellares, 1961), p. 162.

or the women's section, similarly created the Liga de Madres de Familia (LMF). By 1954 the bishops recognized a Confederación de Uniones de Padres de Familia de Colegios de la República Argentina (CUPFRA), set up to defend the fundamental rights and principles of the family. The LMF could claim 20,000 members by 1953, and helped to organize religious education courses which were later taken over by the Instituto de Cultura Religiosa Superior. Both the LMF and the LPF would be active in the campaign to overthrow Perón in 1955.²¹

In 1952 the bishops formed what was to become the most important branch of ACA--the Agrupación de los Profesionales de la Acción Católica (APAC), which included professionals and university students. They had more influence on public decision-making than JAC or Catholic youth.²²

²¹Consult Anuario eclesiástico de la República Argentina, 1961 (Buenos Aires: Instituto Bibliotecológico del Arzobispado de Buenos Aires, 1961), p. 125; "La Liga de Padres de Familia," Boletín de la ACA, XXI (September-October, 1951), p. 103; and Consejo Superior de la A.M.A.C., "30 años de vida en la Asociación de Mujeres de la A.C.," 30 años de Acción Católica, p. 223.

²²Juan Carlos Remón, "Treinta años al servicio de la juventud," 30 años de Acción Católica, pp. 236, 238.

And it was from APAC that Dell'Oro Maini organized a lobby group to support the legalization of private universities when he became Minister of Education in 1955.

Estatuto del Docente, 1947

The church attained a financial boost for its schools when Congress passed a statute providing for state support of personnel salaries. This Estatuto del Docente de Establecimientos Particulares was passed by Congress in 1947 and known as Ley 13.047. By it the state agreed to subsidize the salaries of private schoolteachers and staff according to a sliding scale based on tuition paid by pupils. A private schoolteacher in a tuition-free school could have up to 80% of his salary subsidized by the state.²³

The law also set up a Consejo Gremial de Enseñanza Privada to administer the apportioning of state moneys to the private schools, and the resolution of questions of tenure, salary, and working conditions.²⁴ Twelve persons and a president were to sit on the Consejo; four represented the Ministry of Justice and Public Instruction; two represented

²³Article 24 of the Statute, DSCD 1947, IV, p. 754.

²⁴Article 31 of the Statute, ibid., p. 755.

the Secretariat of Labor; and six represented private schools. The President of Argentina would choose the Consejo's president.²⁵ The Consejo would also award fellowships paying all or part of the tuition of no less than ten percent of the pupils of private schools that had been assimilated previously into the public educational system and had been receiving state support on that basis.²⁶

The Radicals supported the Estatuto del Docente on the grounds that it extended social justice to private schoolteachers, including retirement pay, tenure, and greater contact with public schoolteachers and officials. They considered the Statute to be in the Argentine tradition, stemming from 19th century state subsidies to provincial and private schools, e.g., the 1871 law of subventions,

²⁵Article 27 of the Statute, ibid., pp. 745-55.

²⁶The 1947 Statute covered private normals schools as well as other types of private secondary schools. There were three categories of private schools in the Statute: "a) adscritos a la enseñanza oficial--establecimientos privados de enseñanza primaria, fiscalizados por el Consejo Nacional de Educación, y de enseñanza secundaria, normal o especial, incorporados a la enseñanza oficial dependiente del Ministerio de Justicia e Instrucción Pública; b) libres--establecimientos privados de enseñanza secundaria, normal o especial que, siguiendo los planes y programas oficiales, no estén comprendidos en el apartado anterior; y c) establecimientos privados, de enseñanza, directa o por correspondencia, no incluidos en los incisos a) y b)." (Article 2 of the Statute, ibid., p. 750.)

otherwise known as Ley 463. However, the Radicals pointed to several cases of private schools that would not be covered but that should be, in their judgment. Their main reservation was that the state might abuse its control of private education under the terms of the Statute and dismiss teachers under the guise of enforcing the Statute.²⁷

One of the ways in which this might happen was to take political advantage of article 9, which provided:

El personal será designado por los respectivos establecimientos de enseñanza y, en el caso particular de los establecimientos "adcritos a la enseñanza oficial," con aprobación de los organismos oficiales que corresponda, la que será indispensable para perfeccionar la designación.²⁸

The Statute was amended to meet some of the dissenting arguments of the Radicals, and a modified version was passed in the Chamber. But the Senate rejected the Chamber's version and returned the original bill. The Radicals decided that the original bill was better than no bill and joined with the Peronists to approve the Statute.²⁹ This

²⁷ See speeches by Deputies Oscar López Serrot, Jabel Arévalo Cabeza, Antonio Sobral, and Emilio Ravignani, *ibid.*, pp. 770-71, 774; and in DSCD 1947, VI, p. 75.

²⁸ Article 9 of the Statute, DSCD 1947, IV, p. 751.

²⁹ DSCD 1947, VI, p. 77.

Statute provided state funds to private schoolteachers until Perón came into conflict with the church and withdrew state funds from private secondary schools in February 1955.³⁰ Perón later complained that clerics had become the main beneficiaries of this law.³¹

Other Educational Demands of the Church

Catholics wanted subsidies from the state for their schools while, at the same time, the authority of the state over their schools would diminish. ACA leaders called for the autonomy of Catholic schools, which meant that they could grant diplomas, give examinations, set up curricula, and choose methods of teaching without outside control. Catholics did not challenge the state's establishment of norms for the amount of capital invested in a school, the number of teachers, or the type of examinations given.³²

³⁰Emilio F. Mignone, Política educativa (Buenos Aires: Editorial Pallas, 1955), p. 114.

³¹"... la partida de pago de estos sueldos que era de 13,000,000 en 1947 llegó a 100,000,000 en 1954. Por otra parte, en 1947 el 80% de los profesores de estas escuelas religiosas eran particulares, en tanto sólo el 20% eran sacerdotes. En 1954, en cambio, el 80% eran profesores sacerdotes y el 20% particulares." (Perón, La fuerza es el derecho de las bestias /Havana, Cuba: Santiago Touriño, 1956/7, p. 71.)

³²Oscar R. Puiggrós, "La educación católica," Criterio, XVII (August 10, 1944), 142; and Criterio, XVII (August 17, 1944), 166.

Ley 934 of 1878 was one of the laws that Catholics whittled away during the Peronist era. It provided that graduates of private secondary schools submit to state examinations given by national secondary schools before their titles were "habilitating" or equipped them to practice a profession. But in 1950 a government decree gave CONSUDEC (Consejo Superior de Educación Católica) the right to issue certificates to secondary graduates of their Instituto Adscrito del Profesorado. Thus, nuns and clerics could be certified as secondary schoolteachers by the above Instituto without having to satisfy state requirements of the normal schools, teachers' institutes, and faculties of philosophy and letters. An editorial in La Nación condemned this decree as another instance of favoritism toward private religious schools.³³ In February 1952, the private Instituto de Humanidades de Salta was allowed to grant habilitating bachiller high school degrees autonomously.³⁴

When Perón clashed with the church, however, these decrees were abrogated. On September 30, 1954, Ley 14.389

³³ "Adscripción de institutos del profesorado," La Nación, April 17, 1950, p. 4.

³⁴Mignone, p. 114.

returned to the Ministry of Public Instruction the exclusive right to grant secondary schoolteachers' certificates.³⁵

The church was purportedly behind two bills submitted to the legislature of the Province of Buenos Aires and to the Congress to confine all primary and secondary textbooks to those prepared by the respective governments of the Province and Nation.³⁶ These bills were opposed by educators, publishers, and such liberal organs as La Prensa.³⁷ The provincial bill was milder because it did not insist upon a single book for each course.³⁸ The national bill, as finally passed, provided that the government would approve and print the selected book,³⁹ the "texto único y oficial," for the national schools. Opponents of this law pointed out its implicit authoritarianism. When a "texto único" was introduced into the first grade in 1950, an editorial in

³⁵In February 1955 the Chief Executive withdrew recognition of the bachiller degree awarded by and the state subsidies of the Instituto de Humanidades. (Ibid., pp.113-14.)

³⁶Letter from Ambassador George S. Messersmith to the Assistant Secretary of State Spruille Braden, Buenos Aires, October 4, 1946, pp. 1-2. National Archives file no.835.42/10:34

³⁷"Textos escolares únicos y oficiales," La Prensa, September 21, 1946, p. 4.

³⁸Letter from Messersmith, p. 1.

³⁹George I. Blanksten, Perón's Argentina (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), p. 187.

La Nación complained that this meant a state monopoly of ideology and warned that "Los textos escolares no puedan ser concebidos ni utilizados como instrumentos de adoctrinamiento político o de sometimiento a un rígido orden social-espiritual."⁴⁰

One aspiration of the church that did not receive fulfillment was a Concordat between church and state. The church wanted to maintain its union with the state but remove the tutelage implied in the patronato, as well as to consolidate the educational gains made since 1947--enseñanza religiosa and the Estatuto del Docente--by giving them the sanction of a formal agreement with the Vatican. However, no Concordat was arrived at during 1943-55.⁴¹

Slow Growth of Private Schools

Because the Estatuto del Docente Privado provided funds for student scholarships and staff salaries for private schools, an increase in the number of private schools

⁴⁰"El régimen del texto único," La Nación, April 2, 1950, p. 4.

⁴¹The longing for a concordato can be found in books by writers who reflect the hierarchy's point of view, such as Casiello, p. 351; and Cayetano Bruno, Bases para un concordato entre la Santa Sede y la Argentina (Buenos Aires, 1947), quoted in Furlong, La tradición religiosa, p. 122.

would be expected. What is surprising is that this increase was so overshadowed by the increase of the state schools in the period 1943-55.

In 1943, there were 82 national secondary schools with 37,280 pupils and 8,604 teachers, and 237 private secondary schools with 18,564 students and 3,097 teachers. In 1948, the number of national secondary schools had increased to 131, the number of pupils to 47,590, and the number of teachers to 7,859, whereas there was only a slight increase in the number of private secondary schools--252 with 21,091 students and 7,859 teachers. By 1955, the last year of the Perón era, there were 179 national secondary schools with 77,332 pupils and 10,927 teachers; the number of private secondary schools had risen to 279; the number of pupils had not quite doubled since 1943, since there were 33,423 in 1955, and they were taught by 4,950 teachers.⁴²

In 1943, forty-four percent of all secondary baccalaureate students were in private schools, and this figure remained constant up to 1948. By 1955, only forty-one per-

⁴²Argentina, Ministerio de Educación y Justicia, Enseñanza media: años 1914-1963 (2 vols., Buenos Aires: Estadística Educativa, 1964 [?_7]), I, cuadro nos. 53, 59, pp. 58, 75.

cent of secondary baccalaureate students were matriculated in private schools. The enrollment figures for normal schools are even more demonstrative of state activity: in 1943, sixty-six percent of all normal school students were matriculated in private normal schools; in 1948, the percent had dropped to sixty, and, in 1955, it had been reduced to forty-five percent.⁴³

The state likewise retained the overwhelming presence in primary education it had developed since the era of Sarmiento. In 1954, 91.6% of elementary school students were enrolled in public primary schools.⁴⁴

Di Tella offers two explanations for the slowing up of expansion of the private sector in education, which was practically synonymous with the Catholic sector. First, the church felt it had sufficient influence in the state educational apparatus and did not feel the need to consolidate and expand its own educational system. After all, enseñanza religiosa was being offered in the public schools,

⁴³Di Tella, "Raíces de la controversia educacional argentina," in Los fragmentos del poder, de la oligarquía a la poliarquía argentina, p. 314.

⁴⁴Federico Eduardo Alvarez Rojas, La escuela popular argentina (Buenos Aires: El Ateneo, 1964), cuadro no. 3.1.13. p. 40.

and ardent Roman Catholics were in leadership positions in the Ministry of Education.⁴⁵ This thesis is plausible when one considers that the permanent delegate from Argentina to the International Bureau of Education of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (UNESCO) explained the government's educational program as being "inspired by the highest ideals, and by an ethical principle which does not put science and technology before moral values, but which, on the contrary, respects personality and seeks the spiritual in human nature."⁴⁶ And the church could further relax when the state normal schools made the study of Latin a prerequisite⁴⁷ along with two hours per week of Ethics and the Catholic Religion.⁴⁸ The church enjoyed the privileges and moneys for its religious schools and settled back contentedly in the schools that already existed.

⁴⁵ Di Tella, p. 316.

⁴⁶ UNESCO, International Yearbook of Education 1949 (Geneva: International Bureau of Education, 1949), p. 50.

⁴⁷ UNESCO, International Yearbook of Education 1948 (Geneva: International Bureau of Education, 1948), p. 41.

⁴⁸ UNESCO, Primary Teacher Training, Publication No. 117 (Geneva: International Bureau of Education, 1949), p. 33.

The thesis that the church was satisfied with its influence on the primary and secondary schools seems to hold true for university education as well, since none of the attempts to found private universities during the Perón era came from the church. During Perón's administration six Radical deputies submitted a bill to the Chamber of Deputies to permit universidades libres, or private universities; this attempt failed.⁴⁹ There were two other attempts in 1947 by professors expelled from their jobs. In October, these professors held a convention in Rosario to set up a "democratic" and "autonomous" university that would grant diplomas on its own authority.⁵⁰ In December, their counterparts in Buenos Aires held an assembly to found a private university, calling themselves the Agrupaciones para la Defensa y Progreso de la Universidad Democrática y Autónoma de Buenos Aires y La Plata. The statement of proposals of the assembled forty professors and administrators did not mention titles or diplomas or funds, but academic freedom and the need to avoid the dispersal

⁴⁹Domingorena, Artículo 28: universidades privadas en la Argentina: sus antecedentes, p. 21.

⁵⁰Deputy Perette cites the text of the "Convención pro universidad democrática y autónoma," DSCD 1958, VI, p. 4361.

of Argentine intellectuals forced from their posts.⁵¹

These universities hardly functioned, enfeebled by a lack of funds and legality.

Another explanation for the failure of the church to expand its school system was that the forces which might be described as "the church of the CGT"--consciously identified with lower-class interests rather than with the traditional upper class--had gained predominance within the church itself. These forces were just not much interested in private education, viewing it as a preserve of the upper classes. Similarly, the government was dominated by groups that identified with the popular classes and the trade unions. Thus, neither church nor state took full advantage of the opportunities that were available to promote the growth of Catholic schools.⁵²

It is hard to accept the latter thesis in its entirety. Its author, Di Tella, does not say where the bishops and the cardinal belonged, and they cannot be described categorically as "the church of the CGT." Neither is the above thesis easy to reconcile with the ensuing clash between the church and Perón. The one undeniable concept is

⁵¹"En una asamblea fué fundada la Universidad de Buenos Aires," La Prensa, December 25, 1947, p. 6.

⁵²Di Tella, p. 316.

that the government was strong and popular, and, by extension, did become active on behalf of the popular classes and the CGT.

Perón's government certainly was active in the field of public education. He claimed that 5,000 schools were erected during the first Five-Year Plan, 1947-1951.⁵³ He also said in 1951 that:

I can declare with legitimate pride that my government has constructed more schools in five years than the total erected in the one hundred preceding years.⁵⁴

While these claims are exaggerated, they are near enough to the truth to say that the two Peróns' activity in the educational field did put previous governments to shame--in 1951 alone, 401 new primary schools were opened.⁵⁵ Under the Peróns, the Ministry of Public Works intensified its school-building program, and gave priority to rural and primary schools. The national government also stimulated the provincial governments to build more schools.⁵⁶

⁵³Esteben Peicovich, Hola, Perón, p. 32.

⁵⁴La Razón, April 2, 1951, quoted in Blanksten, p. 198.

⁵⁵Blanksten, p. 198.

⁵⁶UNESCO, International Yearbook of Education 1949, p. 52.

The Ministry of Education was created by the Peróns to show the importance that their popular-based government was giving to education. Heretofore, the administration of education had been under the Ministry of Public Instruction and Justice. The new Ministry of Education was created in June 1949, and consisted of a minister, an under-secretary for culture, a secretary-general, and an under-secretary for the universities.⁵⁷

The educational reforms of the Peróns were influenced by their efforts to reach the popular classes and by their concern to stay in power. Technical education was advanced and adult education was pushed by their government; the private sector had little to do with either. By 1954, 91% of all technical students and 100% of those taking adult education were enrolled in public schools.⁵⁸ The Peróns aimed to wipe out illiteracy and concentrated on the rural areas where it was 234% higher than in the urban areas.⁵⁹ Although Perón was mistaken when he said that "The Argentine republic at the present time has no illiterate children"

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Alvarez Rojas, La escuela popular argentina, p. 40.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 41.

and "Among the adults there exists illiteracy of only 8 to 12 percent,"⁶⁰ he was still right in pointing out that the government had tried to eradicate illiteracy.

The Peróns were attempting to instill nationalism in the Argentine child and represent themselves as embodying that nationalism. The Ministry of Education established a "school journeys" department responsible for the transport and accommodation of pupils at all three levels--primary, secondary, and university--and of visiting foreign students and teachers. Students traveled to all parts of the country under the slogan "Argentiniens Re-discover Argentina."⁶¹ An Argentine patriot was loyal to the Peróns: teachers as well as students were expected to praise the virtues of the Peróns.⁶² The new curriculum and out-of-school activities were Peronist-inspired. The welfare foundation "María Eva Duarte de Perón" contributed gifts and material help to school clubs.⁶³

Thus, the Peróns paid a great deal of attention and

⁶⁰As quoted in Blanksten, p. 198.

⁶¹UNESCO, International Yearbook of Education 1949, p. 53; and UNESCO, International Yearbook of Education 1948, p. 42.

⁶²Blanksten, p. 197.

⁶³UNESCO, International Yearbook of Education 1948, p. 42.

money to Argentine public education as well as helping to finance the private schools. The church was well satisfied with the installation of enseñanza religiosa and morality into the curriculum of the public schools and did not decry their proliferation. What the church did come to mind, however, was the attempt of the Peróns to disseminate their doctrines in seeming competition with the church's.

The Universities: 1945-1955

Peronist control of university education favored the popular classes. Technical education was promoted, and Congress approved a National Technological University in 1948; it opened in 1953 with campuses in Buenos Aires, Bahía Blanca, Córdoba, Mendoza, Santa Fé, Rosario, and Tucumán.⁶⁴ A building program paralleling that found in primary and secondary education was carried out; many new academic buildings were constructed, and work on "university cities" was begun. Not only were examination fees abolished, but tuition was ended by decree in July of 1949;⁶⁵ this policy is still continued, enabling poor students to

⁶⁴Domingorena, Artículo 28, pp. 16-17.

⁶⁵UNESCO, International Yearbook of Education 1949, p. 51.

attend the national universities. The results of these reforms showed up in the enrollment figures: the number of university students rose from 68,460 in 1945 to 142,435 in 1955.⁶⁶

Government control of the universities became increasingly dictatorial except for a brief interlude in 1945-46. This interval saw the restoration of university autonomy as part of a general liberalization inside Argentina prompted by Allied victories in World War II. In February 1945, university professors who had been fired were allowed to return to their teaching posts. University elections returned to power rectors and professors who had opposed the government. The previously banned student organization, FUA, was again permitted to exist by decree in August 1945.⁶⁷ FUA supported Perón's electoral opponents in the Democratic Union. During the "October days" of 1945 students rose in opposition to the Farrell-Perón regime. After initial arrests of students and professors, the military again restored the universities to the control of their elected officials and removed Perón from office.⁶⁸

⁶⁶Walter, Student Politics in Argentina, p. 149.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 124.

⁶⁸Ibid., pp. 129-31.

Having been released from imprisonment by the workers' movement of October 17, 1945, Perón stood for election as president of Argentina and won in February 1946. He immediately moved against the universities so that the "October days" would not be repeated. In the months that followed he intervened all six national universities: more than 70% of their faculty were removed or resigned in protest, so that by the end of 1946 more than 1,000 professors had lost their jobs. Their places were taken by men of inferior ability and accomplishment, many of them coming from ultra-nationalist and Catholic circles.⁶⁹

The Peronist Congress approved a new "University Law" that went into effect on October 4, 1947. This law--Ley 13.031--replaced Ley Avellaneda and ended university autonomy. The Chief Executive had the power to appoint the university rectors, who, in turn, appointed academic and administrative personnel. Students and professors no longer participated in the running of the universities. A sub-secretary in the Ministry of Education was made responsible for the universities.⁷⁰ In 1954 this law was replaced by Ley 14.297 which continued the trend of presidential con-

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 136-37.

⁷⁰ Blanksten, pp. 196-97.

trol of university affairs; a course on national doctrine was made part of the curriculum.⁷¹

Since 1947 professors had been encouraged to teach Peronism, and classes in Peronist political philosophy were made compulsory. Texts were rewritten to glorify the activities of Juan and Evita Perón, which were compared to those of General San Martín.

FUA was suppressed again, and student leaders were arrested and tortured and imprisoned; many went underground or to Uruguay. Those students who engaged in anti-government activity were subject to suspension or loss of credit for examinations previously passed.⁷² Perón created a student organization to replace FUA, one that would support him. The Confederación General Universitaria (CGU) was not only financed by him, but given attractive athletic facilities. In 1952 the Communist university students withdrew their support from FUA and backed Perón for tactical reasons. When the national Communist Party returned to a more neutral position in 1953, the student party remained separate from FUA.⁷³ But in spite of Communist defections,

⁷¹Domingorena, pp. 37-38.

⁷²Walter, pp. 138-39.

⁷³Ibid., pp. 141-42.

political suppression, and a well financed rival student organization, the FUA remained the main student organization in the six national universities, operating clandestinely.

And FUA also picked up support from two sources. It gained the backing of the secondary-school students, or colegianos, who had supported FUA sporadically since the 1918 Reforma. This group, along with the universitarios, supported the Democratic Union in 1946, and, in 1951, they participated in the strike to free the arrested student leader Ernesto Mario Bravo.⁷⁴ The secondary students participating in these activities formed the Federación de Estudiantes Secundarios (FES) in December 1952. FES was set up with the help of university students on the same basis as FUA, and with a program calling for political liberty, a more equal distribution of national income, and student participation in secondary school administration.⁷⁵ From 1952 to 1955 the FES aided the university federations in the struggle against the Perón dictatorship.⁷⁶

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 142.

⁷⁵Federación de Estudiantes Secundarios, Guía del estudiante, quoted in Walter, p. 142.

⁷⁶Walter, p. 142.

FUA also gained the support of liberal Catholic university students. In 1951 a group of Catholic university students formed the Liga de Estudiantes Humanistas, which declared its support of a pluralistic society and opposition to totalitarian government.⁷⁷ In October-November of 1951, a group of students meeting to plot Perón's overthrow were detained and questioned by a Peronist police official of the special section that combated Communism. Some of the students in attendance declared themselves to be Humanists; it was the first time that the students of other political parties realized that there were Roman Catholics against Perón.⁷⁸ The attitude of the church hierarchy toward the Humanists was one of hostility, for at this time the hierarchy was still supporting Perón; another motive for their dislike of the Humanists was that the group emphasized its own independence of official church positions. However, the Humanists managed to stave off formal condem-

⁷⁷ Liga de Estudiantes Humanistas, Humanismo y universidad (unpaginated monograph, Buenos Aires, July, 1953).

⁷⁸ Interview with Gregorio Selser, Buenos Aires, September 10, 1972. Selser was a member of FUA at this time and present at the meeting and police station.

nation and excommunication and to aid FUA in opposing Perón.⁷⁹ In a few years' time, the church hierarchy itself would join the opposition.

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"Por presión de los elementos integristas que asesoraban movimientos estudiantiles, la Curia de Buenos Aires dió a conocer una advertencia censurando y casi condenando al Humanismo." (Bergadá, Argentine Survey S.J.: II--situación educacional, Part 2, p. 258.)

CHAPTER SIX

CHURCH-STATE STRIFE: PART I

The growing conflict between church and state in Argentina is linked to the nation's economic difficulties. This economic crisis, which featured price inflation along with production shortages and--for some--a fall in real income, began to appear as early as 1949, and it meant that economic aspirations of the masses could no longer be met as before. Instead of dealing with these problems solely through economic measures, Perón chose to handle them by extending his political control of the nation, thereby repressing political nonconformity. As he reverted to more totalitarian political mechanisms he eventually came to loggerheads with an institution which also had totalitarian aspirations and insisted on maintaining its political independence--the church.¹

Paradoxically, Perón's extension of political control aggravated his economic problems because it involved new expenditures. A growing state bureaucracy running expanding state programs employed a personal loyal following that

¹Ferns, Argentina, pp. 194-95.

demanded more money. In 1954, those in public administration, excluding defense, education, and public health, amounted to 7%, or 520,000, of a work force of 7,600,000.² The Army purportedly grew from 40,000 in 1943 to 105,000 in 1945 and was cut back to 70,000 in 1949. Military construction, barracks, and factories received huge outlays. Officers were also kept happy with large salary increases that made them higher paid than those in the United States by 1950.³ And by that year, the military budget accounted for one-quarter of all national expenditures. Added to this were the moneys demanded by the Eva Perón Foundation and social welfare measures for urban workers, an enlarged police force and internal security apparatus, the CGT, and subsidies for the church. State funds were further drained by public fiestas, parades, Peronist youth sports events, tourism, and parties. The nationalized railroads, telephone companies, gas and electrical companies, were bought at tremendous cost and run in an expensive but slipshod manner.⁴ State income was depleted by corruption, which

²John J. Johnson, Political Change in Latin America (Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1958), p. 118.

³Alexander, The Perón Era, pp. 118-20.

⁴Daniel Friedenberg, "Peron! Peron! Peron!" New Republic, CXXXIII (September 26, 1955), 14.

increased in the second presidency of Perón and was the subject of scandalous rumors that daily circulated, seemingly confirmed in 1953 by the suicide of Evita's brother Juan Duarte.⁵

Perón's move toward more political control simply reinforced trends that dated from even before 1949. After becoming President in 1946, Perón had ousted the judges on the Supreme Court and replaced them with his sympathizers.⁶ Perón also set out to form a personal political party, which meant the dissolution of the Laborite Party. When one of its leaders, Cipriano Reyes, refused to disband the party, Perón wooed away the other members to isolate Reyes. Besides being the victim of assassination attempts, he was accused in 1948 of plotting to assassinate the Peróns and jailed. He and some of the others imprisoned for alleged complicity in this same plot were subsequently tortured.⁷ Those arrested included representatives of the armed forces, business, landed interests, and the church; the church and armed forces were lumped together since the conspirators

⁵Frank Owen, Peron: His Rise and Fall (London: The Cresset Press, 1957), pp. 92-93.

⁶Alexander, The Perón Era, p. 62.

⁷Ibid., pp. 54-59.

arrested from these two groups were naval chaplains,⁸ a "clever economy of effort."⁹

The growing harshness toward all opponents was apparent in Congress, where the Radical "bloque de los 44" who served in the Chamber of Deputies from 1946-48 were harassed by Perón for their implacable criticism of his economic and political machinations.¹⁰ In 1948 a Radical deputy was even expelled from the Chamber ostensibly for making offensive remarks against the Argentine people.¹¹ Equally ominous was an August 1948 statute granting the President dictatorial powers in a "national emergency."¹²

Restrictions of freedom of the press were lifted for the 1946 election, but in 1947 the government again moved to gag the press. This time opposition newspapers were closed down for not meeting health standards or silenced

⁸Naval chaplains Carlos Grandi and Fedel H. Moreno were released for lack of proof, but Víctor Jorba Farías remained detained. (Gambini, El peronismo y la iglesia, p. 38.)

⁹Ferns, p. 194.

¹⁰In the Senate all were pro-Perón since the two non-Peronistas were not seated after they had won election in 1946. (Felix Luna, Argentina de Perón a Lanusse, 1943-1973 / Buenos Aires: Editorial Planeta Argentina, 1973, p. 51.)

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Alexander, The Perón Era, pp. 68-70.

by intimidation and bribery. Evita and other Peronistas bought out many of the newspapers and magazines of their opponents. And the government began to restrict the supply of newsprint to opposition papers such as La Nación and La Prensa.¹³ Also, throughout 1948, the government acquired private radio stations and effectively muzzled others.

This meant that anti-Peronists had no access to the radio waves until July 1955.¹⁴ Movies also faced government censorship, and some simply were refused showings. Thus, the opposition was denied access to the mass media and only a few newspapers maintained any semblance of independence.

The Peronist Party revised the 1853 Constitution in 1949 to make Perón eligible to succeed himself as President. Two new laws in that same year made it a criminal act to show disrespect or "desacato" for any government official, and made it necessary for political parties to register three years in advance of an election in which they sought to participate so that federal courts could pass on their eligibility, one of the requirements being that they have recognized provincial committees in all fourteen provinces.

¹³Ibid., pp. 62-65.

¹⁴Luna, Argentina de Perón a Lanusse, p. 52.

The latter law on political parties also forbade them to form coalitions.¹⁵ These two laws were used to restrict opposition: two deputies were expelled from Congress for "disrespect" in 1949; in 1950 the Radical candidates for the governorships of Tucumán and Buenos Aires (the latter being Ricardo Balbín) were jailed for the same offense.¹⁶ And when Balbín was released from jail to run for President in 1951, none of the other parties could help him and his Radical Party because coalitions were banned.¹⁷

This political repression was increasing as Argentina's economic condition worsened. In 1949, for the first time since 1890, Argentina could not pay its external debt, and it sought a loan from the United States in 1950. This was because agricultural production was not keeping pace with internal demand, resulting in less meat and grains for export, which had brought in much needed foreign currency. Peronist agricultural policy--artificially holding down farm prices--as well as bad weather aggravated the situation. In 1952, Argentina had to import wheat.¹⁸

¹⁵Alexander, The Perón Era, pp. 68-69.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Owen, pp. 209-10.

¹⁸Arthur P. Whitaker, Argentina (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1964), p. 125.

While Argentine agricultural productivity was contracting, Argentine industry was not faring well either. Only those industries manufacturing consumer goods showed a sufficient rate of capital formation between 1940-44 and 1955. In spite of technological improvements between 1945-1955 there was a decline in worker productivity.¹⁹

Peronist industrial policy also exacerbated the predicament. The nationalization of foreign investments depleted Argentina's reserves. Clearly she should have used these reserves to invest in transportation, power, and capital goods industries where capital formation was inadequate. As much as 73.9% of the capital accumulated during the Peronist administration was diverted to non-productive sectors of the economy, such as housing, services, and government bureaucracy.²⁰

All groups began to feel the consequences of Argentina's economic decline. After 1949, the gross national product declined sharply (in terms of 1950 pesos) to 49.3 billion pesos in 1952 from a high of 62.3 billion in 1948.

¹⁹ Leopold Portnoy, Análisis crítico de la economía argentina (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Economica, 1961), p. 86.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 52-53.

This meant an even sharper decline in per capita wealth since the population grew between 1948 and 1952 from 15.4 million to 18 million.²¹ Indeed, disagreement with Perón's policies was no longer confined to the upper and middle sectors of the population as workers faced a drop in their real incomes after 1948.²² Disaffection with Perón now appeared in groups that propped up his regime--labor, the armed forces, and the church.

From the beginning, the upper classes were hostile to Perón's regime, and he in turn had attacked them as an "oligarchy." He had hurt the landed interests in particular by setting up a state agency, IAPI, to sell and buy agricultural produce at fixed government prices. The upper classes as a whole maintained close social and blood ties with high officials in the church and armed forces. Sectors of the middle classes, such as some small businessmen, medium-sized farmers, professionals, and students, continued to

²¹Whitaker, pp. 124, 137.

²²Workers experienced an increase of about 50% in purchasing power between 1937 and 1948, and wage levels of industrial (urban) workers increased more than consumer price levels from 1943 to 1948. (Tomás Roberto Fillol, Social Factors in Economic Development: The Argentine Case (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1961), pp. 62, 67, 82.

support the Radicals. Some were anti-Peronist because of a class bias against the working classes (or cabecitas negras) who supported Perón. Others opposed Perón because of his despotism and corruption.²³

Beginning in November 1950, the railway men went on strike seeking higher wages and were granted them quickly because Perón feared that his enemies in the armed forces would see weaknesses in his labor support.²⁴ But these wage increases remained on paper, and the railway men went on strike again in December, seeking the heads of their union bosses who were "company men"; they departed, and the union was simply taken over by the CGT. Their wage claims unmet, the workers struck again in late January 1951; Evita visited the railroad stations, sobbed, screamed, and exhorted the men to return to work, but to no avail. Then the government broke the strike by violent means; only La Prensa reported it. Perón hoped to suppress all news of the strikes so that other unions would not grow restive, but they did.²⁵ In August the railway men again went on strike

²³Luna, Argentina de Perón a Lanusse, pp. 73, 79-80, 87-88.

²⁴Owen, p. 155.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 155-57.

with the expectation that other dissatisfied workers would join them while the armed forces carried out a planned revolution to topple Perón.²⁶

But other unions did not join them when they saw that the troops stationed at the Campo de Mayo did not march on Buenos Aires. For junior officers had remained loyal to Perón along with the majority of the army and labor. The uprising had received the support of one wing of the Radical Party²⁷ besides some workers. The leaders of the revolt were officers in the cavalry--including Alejandro Lanusse, future President of Argentina--headed by General Benjamín Menéndez. They had been joined by naval and air force officers. These officers had become disillusioned with Perón for several reasons. First, many of them had an upper-class bias against Perón but had refrained from disposing of him--though some had tried in 1945--because of his support from labor; when rifts appeared in labor, they had decided to go against Perón openly. Second, the armed forces "had it forcibly brought home to them that Perón and his wife were not only impoverishing Argentina but changing its social

²⁶Ibid., pp. 202-03.

²⁷Luna, Argentina de Perón a Lanusse, pp. 72, 74.

character"²⁸ when Evita was nominated for the vice-presidency by the Peronist Party. The idea that a woman could become President of Argentina and, therefore, commander-in-chief of the armed forces was still unacceptable. Military protests, a poor turnout at a rally for her candidacy, and her failing health had forced her to withdraw her nomination.²⁹ Third, the uprising was in reaction to the increasing authoritarianism of the Perón regime. However, in practice it only led to more suppression: Perón had Congress pass a law sanctioning an "estado de guerra interno"³⁰ which, among other dictatorial powers, allowed his government to imprison a citizen without trial. Perón also purged the Army of three retired generals, nine active generals, and fifty-six colonels in an effort to break the power of those officers who opposed him; many of them had opposed Evita's nomination for Vice-President.³¹

When presidential elections were held, in November 1951, the results showed that Perón had not lost the sup-

²⁸Ferns, p. 195.

²⁹Owen, pp. 195, 198-99.

³⁰Luna, Argentina de Perón a Lanusse, p. 72.

³¹Owen, pp. 206-7.

port of the popular masses. In all fairness to his Radical opponent, it must be said that Ricardo Balbín campaigned after his release from jail without access to the radios and newspapers. Even a Radical meeting was broken up by the armed forces; the Radicals faced the constant threat of physical repression. Not surprisingly, therefore, Perón received around 62% of the popular vote.³² Perón's win over Balbín was about a 10% gain on the 1946 election returns. The Peronists swept the Congressional seats, winning all except twelve in the Chamber of Deputies.³³

It seemed by the end of 1951 that Perón had complete control over all groups in Argentina in spite of an economic downturn that already had caused cracks in his support among labor and the armed services. The CGT was an important prop of the government and kept labor in line; officially sponsored confederations of professionals, students, and businessmen tried to do the same with their respective groups. Jewish and Protestant congregations had to register and report their activities annually to the state. Landowners had to deal with state agencies such as IAPI in order to sell their

³²Snow, Argentine Radicalism, p. 69.

³³Ibid.

produce. The armed forces were run by men loyal to Perón or legalistic enough to refrain from a coup d'état. The police were omnipresent and empowered by law to detain any suspect without a trial. Education at all levels was controlled by the state. Radio, and television (new since October 1951), were censored and used as vehicles for state propaganda along with cultural and sports events. The press was gagged and also used to promote the Peronists.

Incipient Church-State Conflict

The one institution not controlled by Perón was the Roman Catholic Church, but, even though somewhat independent, it acted on the whole as a prop to his government. In 1943 the church voluntarily adhered to the military government. During the election campaign of 1945-46 it issued a pastoral letter that aided Perón. In 1948, when the government announced the discovery of a plot to assassinate the Peróns and even arrested three naval chaplains for complicity, the bishops ordered prayers of thanksgiving that Perón and Eva had escaped harm to be intoned in all churches.³⁴ Again in 1951, the church issued a pastoral letter that supported the Peronist Party. From the very beginning the

³⁴Alexander, The Perón Era, p. 128.

Peronist Party welcomed priests as members; most notable of them were Fathers Virgilio Filippo and Arturo Melo. Priests were invited to give their blessings, and anti-Peronist priests were disciplined by the hierarchy.³⁵

Although the church was not directly controlled by Perón, it still was dependent upon him for state subsidies. Both federal and provincial governments constructed churches and seminaries, and sustained many church activities. Cardinal Copello ordered churches designed on one architectural model and relied upon the state to have them erected in different sections of Buenos Aires.³⁶ Beginning in 1943, the church received legal privileges from the state such as enseñanza religiosa that it did not want to lose. Early conflicts were smoothed over because the ecclesiastics "were just as much taken in by him [Perón] as anyone else, and they only turned away from him when he began to gore their ox."³⁷

As the two Peróns moved to change the social and political structure of Argentina it was natural that they would find themselves in conflict with the church, an in-

³⁵Ibid., pp. 128-29.

³⁶Gambini, El peronismo y la iglesia, p. 48.

³⁷Ferns, p. 196.

stitution that had its roots in the established way of doing things. As director of the Secretariat of Labor and Social Welfare in 1943, Perón began to force employers to include welfare benefits in union contracts. Under his auspices the state enacted decrees that would benefit Argentine laborers materially. Eva Perón set up an all-embracing welfare organization, the Eva Perón Foundation, which distributed most charitable contributions in Argentina. In this way, the church's own activities in this field were increasingly overshadowed, to the chagrin of the clergy.

In the same year that Eva was setting up her foundation, she also was instrumental in obtaining the enfranchisement of women. The woman's vote as well as the eligibility of women to hold office were included in the 1949 Constitution. In line with traditional attitudes on the proper role of women, the church opposed woman's suffrage, but it did not make an issue of it when presented with its enactment. The church, of course, was shortsighted to oppose it, for, as Ferns writes, "women in Argentina, as elsewhere, tend to be more pious than men, and potentially a favorable factor for the Church in the equations of politics. But the Church did not see the matter this way at this time."³⁸

³⁸Ferns, pp. 197-98.

Another unalleviated source of tension in church-state relations was Evita's seeking of high papal medals. Three months after enseñanza religiosa was legalized by Congress, she visited the Pope in Rome, hoping to receive the Supreme Order of Christ medal. Instead, she received the inferior Grand Cross of the Order of Pius XII medalion.³⁹ Again in 1949 and 1951 Eva sought the higher medal from the Pope, only to be rebuffed.⁴⁰

The two Peróns sought to make certain red light districts legal in Argentina and here, too, ran up against the church. The hierarchy and Catholic organizations fought the legalization of whore houses, and Cardinal Copello publicly denounced the scheme.⁴¹ During a heated discussion of Cardinals Copello and Caggiano with Perón over prostitution, Copello asked that the government's ecclesiastical advisor (a post created by Perón) not be allowed to speak, since this was a matter for the episcopacy and

³⁹Perón used diplomatic channels to support her ambition and claimed that "Dodero me había asegurado que eso se arreglaba con ciento cincuenta mil pesos....." Father Filippo reported this remark to Cardinal Copello, who protested: "Nada tengo que hacer yo en este asunto. Ha errado el camino." (Quoted in Ludovico García de Loydi, La iglesia frente al peronismo, p. 55.)

⁴⁰Owen, pp. 108, 138.

⁴¹Alexander, The Perón Era, p. 131.

the advisor did not represent it. Perón interrupted Coppello: "Me falta al respeto"; he then chewed out the Cardinal. However, Perón did back down on legalizing bordellos and, for the present, prostitution remained illegal.⁴²

There was one other clash with the church at the end of Perón's first presidency--one that reflected cooling relations between church and state. Perón gave permission for a Spiritualist assembly to be held in Luna Park in October 1950; it was interrupted and broken up by groups of Catholics. These Catholics ran through the streets and began to pray as the police detained 200 of them, 80 for bearing arms.⁴³ Perón was so piqued that Catholics had gone against a meeting authorized by him that he did not officially greet the Papal Legate Cardinal Ruffini, who arrived in Buenos Aires a week later to attend the Fifth Eucharistic Congress scheduled to be held at Rosario. Ruffini pointed out this slight to the Vice-President when he presented his credentials.⁴⁴ The clergy and hierarchy closed ranks and went to Rosario for the Congress--no official escort

⁴²García de Loydi, pp. 57-59.

⁴³"Historia del peronismo: desobedientes y conformistas," Primera Plana, V (November 8-14, 1966), 38, 40.

⁴⁴"Argentina--1951," Hemispherica, I (February, 1951), 3.

was provided Ruffini for this trip--and the Vice-President went, too. On the last day of the Congress, Perón and Eva arrived, knelt, and kissed the ring of the Legate.⁴⁵ Perón delivered

... a highly emotional discourse about brotherly love. The effect of this was completely obliterated a half hour later when, at a banquet tendered him by the chief of Rosario's police, he gave one of his most violent pronouncements against his political opponents, which certainly was intended to reach the ears of the gathered churchmen...⁴⁶

Perón also had government representatives see Ruffini off in order to make sure his opponents did not link up with the Catholics milling around the Legate.⁴⁷

The episcopacy and Perón resumed cordial relations after the Ruffini affair, and the bishops felt they had taught him a lesson.⁴⁸ They again issued a pastoral letter for the 1951 elections that warned Catholics not to support candidates of parties that supported divorce, lay education, etc., i.e., the Radicals.⁴⁹ The hierarchy was also consoled

⁴⁵ Gambini, p. 46.

⁴⁶ "Argentina--1951," Hemispherica, I (February, 1951), 4.

⁴⁷ Gambini, p. 46.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ See above, chapter 5, pp. 119-22.

when Perón, in 1951, became the first Argentine president to ask the Pope for the declaration of the dogma of the Assumption of Mary.⁵⁰ Perhaps Benítez de Aldama, Eva's confessor, best summed up the church's attitude toward Perón:

Seamos sensatos y justos: la Iglesia, el Episcopado y los católicos vibraban al unísono con los hechos. No significaba esto que aprobaron algunas medidas totalitarias y cierta falta de libertad. La Iglesia y los católicos, no obstante estos desaciertos, continuaron inclinándose a lo que pesaba más, a lo bueno, y disimulaban y aún toleraban lo que parecía pesar menos.⁵¹

The Conflict Looms

The first indication of serious trouble with the church occurred within the context of the worsening economic situation. By 1952 Perón again was forced to seek a loan (the first was obtained from the Export-Import Bank in 1950) from the oft-reviled United States. Many in the Army and the CGT, besides the Radicals, Socialists, and others saw this "deviation" from previous Peronist principles as a sellout to foreign capitalists. Again in 1953, nationalists became dismayed as Perón dropped his anti-imperial-

⁵⁰ "Historia del peronismo: desobedientes," p. 43.

⁵¹ Ibid.

ist and anti-Yankee lectures to seek aid from the United States and Britain.⁵² Argentina needed funds to rehabilitate railroads and electric power production, and to extract oil. Oil shortages led him in August 1953 to negotiate a secret contract with the Standard Oil Company of California, and he obtained from Congress a law guaranteeing foreign investments.⁵³ European and United States industrial firms now felt conditions were propitious and began to take over major sectors of Argentine industry. Perón offered tariff protection to Italian, German, and United States firms which made new jobs available to the working class and university graduates. Perón was now supported by foreign industrialists, government office-holders and Peronist sycophants, plus his old allies, the workers.⁵⁴

At the same time Perón lost an invaluable ally--his wife. His circle of friends began to change after Evita's death from cancer of the uterus. She was no longer around

⁵²United States aid is credited with having propped up Peron's regime. ("Perón's Hardest Battle," The Economist, CLXXV (April 23, 1955), 298.

⁵³See Luna, Argentina de Perón a Lanusse, pp. 80-81; and Whitaker, Argentina, p. 146.

⁵⁴Ferns, Argentina, pp. 198-99.

to censor whom he spent his leisure time with, and dishonest speculators and "oscuros interlocutores" replaced the old companions of the first presidency.⁵⁵ Without Evita after August 1952, " . . . Perón began to lose his vital grip, both upon the descamisados and the CGT."⁵⁶ In her own right she had commanded the loyalty of millions of Argentines, especially among the cabecitas negras.

Evita's death affected Perón's relation with the church in several ways. First, Perón began to have sexual relations with teenage girls. Rumors, and even pictures, began to circulate of his relations with minors.⁵⁷ This behavior was condemned as immoral, and not only by the Catholic church.⁵⁸ Second, Evita had paraded herself as a good Catholic and had astutely buttered up the church. It is doubtful that she would have risked an open fight with the church; but without her the possibility could not be ignored.

⁵⁵Luna, Argentina de Perón a Lanusse, p. 81.

⁵⁶Owen, p. 216.

⁵⁷Pierre Lux-Wurm, Le péronisme (Paris: Librairie Generale de Droit et de Jurisprudence, 1965), pp. 153-54.

⁵⁸Canclini, Los evangélicos en el tiempo de Perón, p. 294.

Thirdly, Perón now began a drive for canonization of Evita which frightened and angered the church. Millions of Argentines paid their last respects to her cadaver while the Peronist press and meetings eulogized her. The episcopacy looked askance at the efforts to elevate Evita prematurely to sainthood and were jealous of the cult of Evita that developed outside of the church beyond their control. It appeared that Perón "was going to take over the ritual and merit systems of the Church as a political weapon."⁵⁹

The church feared even more that Peronist doctrine was in competition with the "true faith" for the hearts and minds of the young. Economic woes resulted in an increase of Peronist manipulation of the young. In the late 1940's children's clubs, or Clubes "Evita," had been organized by the government to take elementary students on sports outings on Sundays, the very day the church insisted that they worship. As long as the church felt it was reaching Argentine youth through classes of enseñanza religiosa it appeared to be more than compensated. Then, these classes began to face competition in the schools as the Peróns introduced classes on National Doctrine. The latter system-

⁵⁹Ferns, p. 197.

atically implanted the requirement that teachers discuss the "life and teaching of Perón and their 'significance' for the country."⁶⁰ In March 1951, the two Peróns attended the opening of the Escuela Superior Peronista which was to prepare men and women teachers to teach the National Doctrine in schools throughout Argentina. At this time Perón declared that the purposes of the school were twofold: "The first is the formation of justicialists and the second the exaltation of Peronista values to serve the justicialist doctrine in the best way."⁶¹ In 1953, the first class was graduated.⁶²

Gradually the hierarchy began to draw away from Perón, as he attempted to make Peronism an article of faith for all Argentines. But instead of making a frontal attack upon Perón, the episcopacy gave more leeway to the lower clergy to act. Dissident priests and Catholic laymen were no longer disciplined, except for those Catholic university students who organized the Humanistas completely independ-

⁶⁰Alexander, The Perón Era, p. 132.

⁶¹Blanksten, Perón's Argentina, p. 342.

⁶²"Escuela Superior Peronista," Mundo Peronista, IV (March 15, 1955), 19-21.

ent of hierarchic control.⁶³

As early as 1951 teachers of religion had joined other teachers in protest against having to support Perón's reelection.⁶⁴ It was also in religious education courses, according to an ex-Director of Religious Education, that Perón was first criticized within the schools. Dealing with topics such as man's conscience and freedom, and commonly enjoying job security as clerics, religion teachers were less inclined to stifle student criticism of Perón.⁶⁵

The economy meanwhile continued to worsen, and political repression to increase. In 1953, Perón denounced the "psychology of rumor" and ominously stated that the Executive Power was ready "to take indispensable measures to assure public safety."⁶⁶ After Evita's brother Juan was involved in corruption and committed suicide, Perón expressed what many already felt: "Estoy rodeado de ladrones y alca-
huetes."⁶⁷

⁶³See above, chapter 5, pp. 146-47.

⁶⁴Interview with López Moure, Buenos Aires, August 9, 1972,

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Lux-Wurm, p. 151.

⁶⁷Luna, Argentina de Perón a Lanusse, p. 79.

The opposition also became more violent: on April 15, 1953, a bomb(s) exploded while Perón was speaking to a crowd of his CGT supporters in front of the Casa Rosada. Perón promised revenge, and on April 15 and 16 unidentified persons connected with the CGT put fire to the Jockey Club and to the party headquarters of the Radical, Socialist, and National Democratic (Conservative) Parties, plus a bar frequented by the opposition. This began a vicious circle of direct physical violence on opponents, further poisoning Argentine politics.⁶⁸

Perón also turned his attention to increasing his political control of Argentine youth. The creation of a Confederación General Universitaria to draw away members from the banned FUA and the regimentation of university administration and curricula have been noted in the previous chapter.⁶⁹ At the secondary level, the Minister of Education Armando Méndez San Martín in 1953 formed the Union de Estudiantes Secundarios (UES).⁷⁰ Secondary students through-

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ See above, chapter 5, pp. 143-45.

⁷⁰ "U.E.S.: escuela de solidaridad," Mundo Peronista, IV (June 1, 1955), 30-31.

out Argentina could join the UES and participate in sports, tours, broadcasting and other activities. Perón delighted in the UES, and funds flowed to it: already in November 1953, the male branch of the UES could move into new and permanent headquarters on the Avenida Las Heras.⁷¹ An elegant sports and country club for the UES was built on land adjoining the President's home in Olivos; the female quarters of this club were connected by a tunnel known as the "pochoduc" to the presidential home. For Perón had taken the nickname of "Pocho" and enjoyed cavorting with female UES motor scooter formations, also known as "pocho-netas."⁷² It seemed that Perón was spending most of his time with the UES. There was hardly an issue of Mundo Peronista that did not carry an article and pictures of Perón viewing and promoting its activities.

The church disliked this steady increase in political encroachment upon a domain in which it, too, was very much interested--doctrine and activities for the nation's youth. An American author prophetically wrote in 1951 that "if the trend toward a totalitarian form of Peronismo continues,

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Lux-Wurm, p. 154; and "Motonetas: otra industria nacional," Mundo Peronista, IV (November 1, 1954), 13-15.

the teaching of that 'one true faith of all Argentines' is likely to come into conflict with the teaching of the Faith of the Church."⁷³ Neither was the church immune to the growing disaffection with Perón brought about by Argentina's economic slide. As other groups stepped up their opposition to Perón, it was only natural that opposition would grow within the church.

As noted above, the church hierarchy did not rein in Catholics who went against Perón after 1951. By 1954 it became apparent that the church, the one truly national institution that had not been purged or dominated by Perón, was moving toward even greater independence. Likewise, Catholic laymen began to form groups to study and plan the organization of a political party, the Christian Democratic Party, that would have at least informal ties with the church. Among these were Manuel V. Ordóñez who headed the Fraternidad circles, the Fray Mamerto Esquiú group whose headquarters were in the house of Pedro Baliñas, Alberto Vélez Funes and Marcos Agrelo who headed the Unión Cristiana Democrática in Córdoba, and a democratic Catholic sector of Rosario which was directed by Juan T. Lewis.⁷⁴ Catholics who had

⁷³Alexander, The Perón Era, p. 132.

⁷⁴Gambini, El peronismo y la iglesia, p. 48.

opposed Perón from the beginning had been held back by the hierarchy when liberal magazines such as Estrada were censored by the hierarchy. Now they received the support of the episcopacy, and the Christian Democratic Party was formed in July 1954.⁷⁵

The episcopacy also showed interest in promoting church-oriented labor unions, vindicating Bishop de Andrea's thinking. In mid-1953, Cardinal Caggiano had disclaimed any interest of the church to form unions during a speech at the Eighth Diocesan Assembly of Catholic Action:

No pretende la AC--porque no pretende la Iglesia--dirigir los sindicatos ni dirigir los partidos políticos.⁷⁶

In 1954, however, Catholic Youth workers started to proselytize in factories,⁷⁷ and in November Perón was to accuse the church of infiltrating labor unions as well as political parties.

The church also stepped up its organizing activities among secondary students to counter the UES. The church al-

⁷⁵Ibid., pp. 48, 74.

⁷⁶Antonio Caggiano, "La Acción Católica, sus derechos y sus deberes ante la iglesia y la sociedad civil," Boletín Oficial de la ACA, XXIII (July, 1953), 138.

⁷⁷Friedenberg, "Peron! Peron! Peron!" New Republic, p. 15.

ready had student members of Catholic Action groups to act as a Union of Catholic Students.⁷⁸ Priests further responded to Perón's immoral carrying-on with the teenage girls of the UES by recommending from the pulpit that mothers not allow their daughters to attend UES functions.⁷⁹ The clergy's criticisms of the UES came on top of the founding of the Christian Democratic Party and the church's union activity, aggravating tensions even more.

Perón still appeared secure in his political control of Argentina. Elections for a new Vice-President had been held on April 25, 1954, in which the Peronist candidate had received 4,994,106 votes to 2,493,422 for the opposing Radical candidate.⁸⁰ What did preoccupy Perón and his Minister of Education Méndez San Martín, however, was the church's competition with the Peronists for the allegiance of the young. The government began to attack the independence of the Catholic schools, as when, in September 1954, by authority of the 1947 Estatuto del Docente, it imposed the manda-

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Statements of Manuel V. Ordóñez, the main founder of the Christian Democratic Party in Rosario, quoted in Gambini, pp. 81-82.

⁸⁰ Lux-Wurm, p. 151.

tory teaching of the National Doctrine in private schools. This decree was issued while scandalous rumors about Perón's activities with the feminine branch of the UES were circulating. In the same month, Congress passed a law granting illegitimate children the same rights as those born to married parents; this antagonized the church and convinced many clerics that they should no longer support Perón.⁸¹ In the light of such developments, Catholics were all the more inclined to censure Perón's totalitarian pretensions to dominate the spiritual content of national education.⁸²

The latent conflict between the two "true faiths" of Peronism and Catholicism over Argentine youth came permanently out into the open when Perón's special love, the UES, was rebuked by Catholic Action: in Buenos Aires the directors of Catholic Action criticized a huge fiesta given by Perón at his presidential residence for UES athletes on September 21, 1954, and at the same time criticized Méndez San Martín. There followed a vitriolic campaign on the part of Catholic Action against both the UES and the Minister of Education.⁸³ In Córdoba, Catholic Action threw a huge par-

⁸¹Owen, p. 221.

⁸²Lux-Wurm, p. 247.

⁸³Gambini, p. 75.

ty at the same time that one was going on for the UES; the former had a larger turnout than the latter.⁸⁴ These clerical or clerically-inspired moves against the UES so affected Perón that he became furious with the church and with the clergy generally.⁸⁵ Pressure was brought to bear on Catholic Action in Córdoba that resulted in the dismissal of some of its functionaries. The Peronist press geared up for a campaign against the clergy--denouncing their "infiltrations" into national institutions and the "imperialism of the cassock."⁸⁶

The Ministry of Education became one of the main centers of the controversy, for Minister of Education Méndez. San Martín was adamant that Perón take a stand against the church.⁸⁷ He was convinced that the teachers of enseñanza religiosa were anti-Peronist and concluded from this that the church was too.⁸⁸ As the founder of the UES, he person-

⁸⁴Lux-Wurm, p. 247.

⁸⁵García de Loydi, La iglesia frente al peronismo, p. 49.

⁸⁶Lux-Wurm, p. 247.

⁸⁷Pablo Marsal, Perón y la iglesia (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Rex, 1955), pp. 10, 22, 37.

⁸⁸Interview with López Moure, Buenos Aires, August 9, 1972.

ally was subject to intense Catholic Action criticism. Catholics accused him of being a puppet of the Masonic lodges, and blamed him for having the "machivellian" goal of pitting Perón against the church.⁸⁹ Catholics also accused him of forging some of the pamphlets that were circulating on Perón's private life to appear as the work of Catholic Action.⁹⁰

Another center of opposition to the church was the labor movement. Traditionally, the workers had been anti-clerical; older trade unionists had told an American scholar in 1950 "that they did not particularly like the close link between Perón and the Church, but that it was not a sufficiently grave issue to get upset about, in view of the good things which Perón was doing."⁹¹ The unionists in the CGT were inclined to blame the clergy for growing popular disaffection toward Perón's government, and their anti-clericalism was soon to become virtually an antireligious policy.⁹²

Perón himself later blamed his breach with the church

⁸⁹García de Loydi, p. 49.

⁹⁰Marsal, p. 13.

⁹¹Alexander, The Perón Era, p. 130.

⁹²Luna, Argentina de Perón a Lanusse, pp. 83-84.

on the latter's attempt to compete with the state and its associations:

Junto con la aparición del partido Demócrata Cristiano en la Argentina, comenzaron a aparecer Asociaciones de médicos, maestros, abogados, industriales, ganaderos, obreros católicos, etc. Esto promovió un sentimiento de inquietud entre los dirigentes de las más diversas organizaciones gremiales, hasta que un día se presentaron a mi despacho los Secretarios Generales de la Confederación General del Trabajo, Económica, de Profesionales, de Estudiantes, etc. En esa reunión me hicieron presente su inquietud por la intervención de la Iglesia en sus actividades gremiales. Ellos entendían que la Iglesia podía asociar a los católicos, pero no a los obreros, profesionales, estudiantes, etc., como entes gremiales y, en consecuencia, pedían una solución al conflicto por parte del gobierno.⁹³

On September 27, 1954, in a move principally directed against Catholic professional organizations, the Congress passed a law withdrawing "juridic personality" from associations based on a religion, belief, nationality, race, or sex.⁹⁴ This meant that Catholic associations of professionals would no longer enjoy legal status.

Perón next addressed himself to the threat of competition of Catholic unions to the CGT. In a speech to

⁹³Perón, La fuerza es el derecho de las bestias, p. 72.

⁹⁴Lux-Wurm, p. 248.

the CGT on September 29, Perón assailed Catholic unions:

I recall that when I came to power, religious syndicates already existed. What is religion doing in that area? The workers do not want to be encumbered by religion, and religion must not enter into the unions. They that want religion may practice it in their private lives, but not in the unions where we are all the same.⁹⁵

This tirade against Catholic syndicates was not taken seriously by the hierarchy, who considered the speech of "minor" importance.⁹⁶

In the month of October, Perón began in earnest his campaign against the church, "la única institución todavía independiente."⁹⁷ On October 17, he made an indirect reference to the clergy while discussing the enemies of Peronism, and called on Argentines to choose sides, since neutrality was unpatriotic.

En este momento, si miramos el panorama de la República en el orden político, veremos tres clases de adversarios: los políticos, los comunistas y los embozados . . . Están también los apolíticos, que son algo así como la bosta de paloma; y son así porque no tienen ni buen ni mal olor. Y los enemigos disfrazados de peronistas, que también los hay. A estos los

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 247.

⁹⁶At least so said Manuel Tato, the auxiliary bishop of Buenos Aires who was exiled by Perón in June 1955. (Manuel Tato, "Exile's Story," The Sentinel of the Blessed Sacrament, LVIII [November, 1955], 522.)

⁹⁷Luna, Argentina de Perón a Lanusse, p. 83.

vamos conociendo poco a poco, y eliminando de toda posibilidad . . . Cuando la suerte de la República se juega en su destino, hay un solo delito infamante para el ciudadano: no estar en ninguno de los dos bandos o estar en los dos.⁹⁸

The government stepped up its pressure on the church: the Minister of the Interior, having taken over jurisdiction in the municipality of Buenos Aires, prohibited a series of conferences organized by the Catholic Action Center of Professionals of Economics. He also prohibited Family Week which had been organized by the Corporation of Catholic Lawyers.⁹⁹

On October 22, Perón held a meeting at the Casa Rosada with sixteen members of the church hierarchy, including Cardinals Copello and Caggiano and the papal nuncio Zanín.¹⁰⁰ As to what transpired during this meeting, there are two principal versions, both emanating from Perón. When Perón first spoke of what happened in an address at Luna Park, he said that the episcopacy was in agreement with the

⁹⁸Gambini, pp. 75-76; and Mundo Peronista, IV (November 1, 1954), 23-24.

⁹⁹César H. Belaunde, "La persecución religiosa de 1945-55," 30 años de Acción Católica, p. 53.

¹⁰⁰The date of this meeting is mentioned in only one source. (Gambini, p. 76.)

Peronists' charges that certain clerics were infiltrating their organizations and hurting their movements. Perón had called representatives of the "Organizaciones del Pueblo"--Confederación General del Trabajo, Confederación General del Profesionales, Confederación General Económica, Confederación General Universitaria, Asociación Estudiantil, "y otras entidades de distinto carácter"--to come meet with the episcopacy at that very gathering. The calling of these Peronist representatives had been on short notice, according to Perón's original version, for they were "sorprendidos con mi llamado y no tenían los documentos ni los casos concretos que podrían citarse en una reunión como ésta."¹⁰¹

Yet the clerics seemed to have been willing to believe the Peronist charges:

Me dijeron ese mismo día los prelados, que eran los primeros que condenaban esa acción al margen de la obligación de los clérigos y que, como en todas las organizaciones humanas, había hombres que cumplían y hombres que no cumplían.¹⁰²

In a later recounting of these events, Perón still saw himself as an independent referee, but the tone had be-

¹⁰¹ "Una situación clara," Mundo Peronista, IV (December 1, 1954), 24.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 23.

come more anti-episcopacy. Perón called the representatives of the Organizaciones del Pueblo so that they could "better inform" the episcopacy of the "demandas de las organizaciones sindicales." The hierarchy was more antagonistic and defended their associations on the grounds that they were religious, an inkling that more than just "clerical infiltrations" of organizations was involved, as Perón had before simply described the encounter. Perón went on to state that the explanations of the ecclesiastics were not accepted by the labor representatives and that he decided to appoint a commission to settle the dispute and render "al César lo que era del César y a Dios lo que era de Dios."¹⁰³ Perón lamented that this commission was never named and that a crisis developed because of popular demonstrations against the aforementioned clerical activities.¹⁰⁴

One thing certain is that the principal non-church parties present at the conference were Perón and Minister of Education Méndez San Martín, for it was rivalry in education that instigated the confrontation between church and state. In fact, criticism of the UES had piqued Perón

¹⁰³Perón, La fuerza es el derecho de las bestias, p. 73.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

and Méndez San Martín to the point where they decided to bring private education fully under their control, ending the privileges, and thereby the independence, of Catholic schools and Catholic youth groups and associations. Because the church viewed part of its historic mission as the education of the young, it could hardly give in to Perón's intervention in this area. Already the government had decreed that private schools must teach the National Doctrine. The church was to face more government interference in the schools in the months ahead, resulting in the resolve of the church to make a stand against Perón. Lux-Wurm concluded, "Ce fut sans doute à cause des interventions réitérées de l'Etat dans l'enseignement privé que le clergé commença à manifester de la mauvaise humeur."¹⁰⁵

The church hierarchy still did not openly attack Perón, but neither was it failing to notice that others were. Since the beginning of October, university students were carrying out a nationally organized strike against the Perón government in protest against police acts in breaking up a student assembly of engineering students at the University of Buenos Aires. The outlawed student federations of FUA had called this strike, revealing the inability of the Peronists to co-

¹⁰⁵ Lux-Wurm, p. 247.

erce, indoctrinate, and entice youth.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, on November 1, 1954, the hierarchy did make an indirect attack on Perón, showing that it still was an independent force that had to be reckoned with. It published a pastoral letter condemning "the aberrations of spiritism,"¹⁰⁷ a veiled criticism of Perón, who had permitted spiritualists to assemble in Argentina and who had met with them. The bishops had only ten days to wait before they received Perón's response.

¹⁰⁶Walter, Student Politics in Argentina, pp. 143-46.

¹⁰⁷Gambini, p. 76.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CHURCH-STATE STRIFE: PART II

Government Offensive

Perón retaliated on November 10, 1954, with a speech that was a bombshell, surprising the public and commencing a virulent and violent campaign against the Argentine Roman Catholic Church. In this address to the provincial governors, territorial delegates, and "representatives of the popular forces," he denounced Catholic Action as "una asociación internacional que en su seno, contará, sin duda, con anti-peronistas." He accused Catholics of causing problems for the trade unions, the Confederación General Económica, the Confederación de Profesionales, the Confederación General Universitaria, and the other student organizations.¹

Perón continued by insisting that he had no problem with the church, only with a few priests and Catholic laymen "que están perturbando." He called on "los responsables de la Iglesia argentina" to condemn them and take sanctions against them as they had promised! He then denounced three

¹Hechos e Ideas, XXVII, nos. 126-127 (October-November, 1954), 385-97.

bishops as "enemigos del gobierno": Bishops Laffite, Fasolino, and Ferreyra of Córdoba, Santa Fé, and La Rioja respectively. He went on to identify individual priests from the provinces of Corrientes, Catamarca, Santiago del Estero, San Luis, and Río Negro as enemies. The most troublesome priests were in the province of Córdoba: a Father Bordagaray who was an advisor to the Catholic union of university students, the Ateneo Universitario de Córdoba, had gone so far as to state that one must choose between Christ and Perón.² This speech, formulated after discussions between Perón and leaders of the Peronist Party and CGT,³ was broadcast twice over the national radio network, giving it wide publicity and a greater impact.⁴

Perón broadened his attack to include "clerical infiltration" of unions and organizations rather than merely clerical influence on the young, clerical competition in education, and clerical criticism of the UES. This is because Perón needed shock troops which were to be found in the CGT and Peronist Party. Supporters from these groups

²Ibid.

³Owen, p. 222.

⁴Tato, "Exile's Story," p. 522.

were more likely to be enthused to do battle with the church if they saw a clear and present danger to them. Since the Peronist state had helped the church in the field of education through subsidies, a law for enseñanza religiosa, and the 1947 Estatuto del Docente which provided moneys for private schools, it would be difficult for Perón to denounce Catholic infiltration of education. It was even harder for Perón to allude directly to clerical condemnation of his immoral relations with the UES since most Argentines condemned them. Thus Perón consulted with his allies in the CGT and Peronist Party to find issues which would convince their members to move against the church.

Perón handed over his list of clerics who had provoked him to the Minister of Foreign Relations and Cult who immediately began to arrest and detain them, in spite of a visit on November 11 from the Papal Legate Zanín to the Minister.⁵ The government's propaganda machine began to roll: Democracia spoke of evil pastors, and the Peronist press insulted the clergy and pope. La Prensa, under Peronist control since 1951, charged that "what these priests are trying to do is sit at a table that has already been

⁵Gambini, El peronismo y la iglesia, p.81.

laid, take over, and gain credit for what they did not create. . . ." ⁶ Plainclothesmen began taking notes on what priests said from pulpits. ⁷ A Cordobés priest was arrested for supposedly preaching a sermon in which he compared Hitler's persecution of Catholics to Perón's. ⁸ Municipal orders were issued to remove posters announcing the Misión Bonaerense and to dismantle church loudspeakers. Religious acts were cancelled, more priests detained, and Catholic radio programs were taken off the air.

On November 25, 1954, the very Sunday the church was protesting its persecution in a pastoral letter to the laity, Perón addressed a mass meeting at Luna Park organized by the Peronist Party and the CGT to protest "clerical infiltration." Perón averred that "no force in the world can control our Government and place it in opposition to the people," ⁹ and claimed that he had run out of patience because the bishops had not taken any action to rectify the wrongs he had cited in his November 10th speech to the

⁶Tato, p. 522.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Owen, pp. 222-23.

⁹Owen, p. 223.

governors. Peronists marched to this assembly carrying banners and standards bearing such slogans as "Perón, Yes! Priests, No!", "No more Religious Teaching!", and "We Want Divorce."¹⁰ A dummy priest was hung from the gallows, and the presidents of the male and female branches of the CGT made violent speeches:¹¹ "Our people know that it is not necessary to respect empty idols and that the habit does not make the monk"; "The oligarchy hides behind cassocks"; "War is a man's affair; they should not complain like women"; "To the rear, merchants of religion, to the back, enemies of the people and enemies of God."¹²

University students in Santa Fé and Córdoba were arrested during police raids in November. Forty-five professors, including five priests, were dismissed from the University of Córdoba by special order of Perón on December 28. The entire provincial judiciary was suspended in Córdoba. The city of Córdoba, Argentina's most Catholic major city, was being singled out for repression of dissent.¹³

¹⁰Ibid., p. 224.

¹¹Belaunde, "La persecución religiosa," pp. 53-54.

¹²Lux-Wurm, Le péronisme, p. 248.

¹³Owen, pp. 222-23, 225.

General harassment of the church throughout Argentina continued. A law banned open mass meetings and public processions without official permission, and under this law religious processions were prohibited by the Subsecretary of Religion of the Ministry of Foreign Relations and Cult Father Leonardo Benítez de Aldama,¹⁴ the brother of Evita's confessor. In defiance of one of these orders, the church celebrated the Marian year with a procession in the federal capital while the government staged a counter demonstration welcoming back a boxing champion.¹⁵ The demonstrators at the Catholic ceremony gathered outside the Cathedral and Cardinal Copello's residence to protest the government's anti-clerical policy: they chanted "Argentina is Catholic!" and "Long live the Pope!"¹⁶ A secret order to create disturbances in the churches was circulated among the females of the Peronist Party.¹⁷ Religious symbols were removed from public offices and unions, and secular Christmas decorations were substituted for religious ones in the federal

¹⁴ Belaunde, p. 54.

¹⁵ Tato, p. 523.

¹⁶ Owen, p. 224.

¹⁷ Belaunde, p. 54.

capital.¹⁸

Christmas was celebrated laicallly by the state, with the Secretary-General of the CGT addressing the people on radio and asking them to drink to the health of Perón and Evita, and to the country. On the Epiphany, Perón broadcast a message recalling that "men and their children are the sole and unique Magi Kings who, in the future, will assure the country's destiny and bestow it with gifts."¹⁹ The cult of Evita was extended, and pictures of her in saintly clothes and postures appeared.²⁰

Several measures were adopted in December 1954 that were meant to hurt or at least annoy the church. Divorce was legalized on December 14; it was learned on December 21 that public reunions could be intervened by the police if they menaced public tranquility or if the celebration were against the interests of the people;²¹ and houses of prostitution, legally closed down since 1936, were authorized by a decree of December 30, signed by President Perón and

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Lux-Wurm, p. 249.

²⁰Mundo Peronista, IV (January 15, 1955), p. 23.

²¹Lux-Wurm, p. 249.

all his Cabinet ministers.²²

The government hit hard at Catholic education, the church's most sensitive area since education was central to its divine mission to teach the faith. Catholic university associations such as the Ateneos at the universities of Santa Fé and Córdoba were dissolved.²³ The Jesuit Colegio del Salvador lost its autonomy for the primary grades enjoyed since November 1943, when a decree of December 10, 1954, abolished this privilege.²⁴ Similarly, the Jesuit Instituto de Humanidades de Salta lost state recognition of its degrees of bachillerato, granted since February 1952, by a decree issued on January 12, 1955.²⁵

Decree No. 20.564 of December 2, 1954, put the church on notice that the government threatened its catechism classes in the national schools. In the "consideraciones" to this decree, the government argued that particularly in the light of legislation establishing National Doctrine as a required element of the curriculum the Ministry of Education could not abdicate its supreme responsibility in the

²²Owen, p. 225.

²³Belaunde, p. 54.

²⁴ALA 1954, XIV-B, p. 1334.

²⁵ALA 1955, XV-A, p. 50.

field of education. This in turn precluded an outside authority such as the Autoridad Eclesiástica interfering in the selection of teachers, texts, and curriculum even for religion and morality classes. Therefore, article two of this decree ended the offices of Direction and Inspection of Religious Education and Morality within the Ministry of Education.²⁶

This decree did not terminate enseñanza religiosa in the national schools, but it was a harbinger of the government's intentions. A decree of December 8 authorized the firing of religion teachers in the national schools,²⁷ and by the beginning of 1955, 102 clerics had been dismissed;²⁸ but classes of enseñanza religiosa existed until they were ended by ministerial resolution in April, and by Congressional law in May.

On December 28, 1954, the government ended its financial support of Catholic schools by abrogating article 24

²⁷This decree had the goal of ending religious education in the public schools. ("Nuestra Contribución a la Paz de la Paz de la Patria: Declaración Episcopal Denunciando la Persecución Religiosa en la Argentina," June 7, 1955, quoted in Criterio, XXVIII [July 28, 1955], 523-29.)

²⁸Lux-Wurm, p. 249.

of the 1947 Estatuto which provided for state funding of the personnel of establecimientos adscriptos.²⁹ Private schools were being closed on various pretexts, and, by the beginning of 1955, eighty private schools had been closed.³⁰

Ecclesiastic Offensive

The church hierarchy reacted to the government's moves by publishing a series of pastorals, by exhorting the faithful, and by holding demonstrations; all the while, it hoped to renew negotiations with Perón, in order to regain its former privileges and autonomy. In this vein it sent letters to Perón: a letter of November 19, 1954, from the cardinals and bishops, reminded Perón that the church did its spiritual work within a peaceful atmosphere, that it had been helped by Perón who had sponsored the law for enseñanza religiosa. Now the episcopacy was left with the impression of "asombro" and "estupor" in light of the public charges made by Perón along with his denunciation

²⁹"Cartas del Episcopado Argentino al Excmo. Sr. Presidente de la Nación Argentina y al Excmo. Sr. Ministro de Educación de la Nación," March 16, 1955, quoted in Revista Eclesiástica de Buenos Aires, LV (April, 1955), 117-18.

³⁰Lux-Wurm, p. 249.

of a small number of priests accused of interfering in unions and student organizations. The letter affirmed the apolitical character of the church's institutions, ACA, clergy, and bishops. Perón was reminded of his words at the close of the 1953 First Congress of Enseñanza Religiosa:

Yo como católico, siento una inmensa satisfacción por el trabajo realizado por Vds. como así también, como servidor de la doctrina cristiana siento la inmensa satisfacción.³¹

Another letter was sent to Perón from the Argentine episcopacy a day later, asking him for a list of specific charges against the church.³²

The episcopacy then turned to the faithful, issuing a pastoral on November 22 to be read in all churches on Sunday, November 25 and December 5. It stated that in face of the denunciations made against certain priests and Roman Catholic associations the bishops would adopt the appropriate measures. The bishops went on to recall the respective rights of church and state. The priest was not to remain indifferent but was expected to defend eternal values when confronted with the lay school, divorce, or Communism. The

³¹ "Carta al Excmo. Sr. Presidente de la Nación," November 19, 1944, quoted in Criterio, XXVII (November 25, 1954), 843-44.

³² Tato, p. 524.

church's mission could not be confined to the temples because she must preach the Gospel everywhere. Yet the priest and Catholic Action were to remain outside and above political parties.³³

After this pastoral was read, Cardinal Copello and Nuncio Zanín went to see the Minister of Foreign Relations and Cult to negotiate the disputes. But this came to naught: Perón had deduced from the pastoral that the church had begun a war with the state, and he had decided to answer it by the Decree of December 2, 1954, which began the government's attack on enseñanza religiosa.³⁴

The church had to contend with Peronist ideas of Christmas in the month of December besides defending its school system and religion classes in the public schools. The church tried to warn the faithful away from lay celebrations of Christmas that fed the cult of Evita. A circular of December 2 forbade Catholics "to attend acts that pretend to have a religious character without having been approved in advance by the hierarchy."³⁵ The church ended

³³ "Carta Pastoral a los Cabildos Eclesiásticos, al Clero Diocesano y Regular y a Todos los Fieles," November 22, 1954, quoted in Criterio, XXVII (November 25, 1954), 844-45.

³⁴Gambini, p. 83.

³⁵Lux-Wurm, p. 249.

December condemning the legalization of divorce and prostitution, and warning against the separation of church and state.³⁶

January was a quieter month, but there were ominous signs for the church. Chaplains were expelled from seventeen prisons on the 14th.³⁷ The municipality of Buenos Aires permitted a strip-tease place to open.³⁸ The Bishop of Santa Fé published a pastoral calling on all to "trabajar incansablemente por mejorar el ambiente espiritual y moral que nos rodea."³⁹ The church also forged weapons to fight the state: there were demonstrations of the church faithful; a clandestine press sprang up to combat the official press, Verdad being the most renowned example. The letter sought to refute charges against the church and its activities and to encourage solidarity in face of government persecution.⁴⁰

The fact that schools were closed for summer vaca-

³⁶"Pastoral of December 23, 1954," quoted in Gambini, p. 83.

³⁷Tato, p. 523.

³⁸Gambini, p. 84.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Belaunde, "La persecución religiosa," pp. 556-59.

tion until mid-March somewhat lessened the tension on the education front, and in particular reduced the involvement of students in the church-state dispute. Moreover, during this lull Cardinal Copello and Perón tried to reach an accommodation; there were meetings between them on February 22 and 24.⁴¹ Copello also met with the Minister of Education.⁴² Nevertheless, decrees continued to be issued that undermined the position of Catholic schools, and when schools reopened in March the government stepped up its policy to end Catholic competition with it in the field of education.⁴³

On March 1, 1955, Decree No. 2917 ended the autonomy of the Instituto Adscripto del Profesorado del Consejo Superior de Educación Católica, granted it by previous decree in March 1950. This meant that the titles issued to its graduates for teaching in secondary education were no longer recognized by the state. Students already enrolled could transfer to the Instituto Nacional del Profesorado Secundario of the federal capital.⁴⁴ Also on March 1, two schools

⁴¹ Gambini, p. 84.

⁴² Tato, p. 524.

⁴³ See above, pp. 194-95.

⁴⁴ ALA 1955, XV-A, p. 90.

operated by the Assumptionist order were closed in the federal capital. Soon after, the Instituto de Humanidades in Salta was intervened.⁴⁵

The hierarchy responded with several letters in mid-March. In a message to the Minister of Education the episcopacy lamented the present organization of religious education in the public schools. Without their approval of texts, curriculum, and teachers the orthodoxy of these courses was imperiled.⁴⁶ In a letter to Perón written on the same day, the hierarchy complained that the constitutional rights of its private schools had been violated. They deplored "la actual condición a que han sido reducidos los colegios católicos." They specifically asked Perón to suspend the decrees and resolutions which ended state funding of private schools, ended the autonomy of the Instituto del Profesorado of CONSUDEC, and gave the Ministry of Education the authority to release from employment and transfer the personnel of religious schools.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Belaunde, p. 56.

⁴⁶ Letter of March 16, 1955, "Cartas del Episcopado Argentino," pp. 121-23.

⁴⁷ This letter was also dated March 16, 1955, ibid., pp. 117-18.

The hierarchy also made it clear to the faithful in a Lenten Pastoral of March 19, 1955, that was read on March 27, that it considered religious education in the public schools to be of prime necessity to the church:

Con el restablecimiento de la enseñanza religiosa, así ha acontecido en la escuela argentina; y es de esperar que la comprensión y buena voluntad de los gobernantes mantengan esta conquista, reconocida como necesidad hasta en naciones alejadas de la Iglesia católica.⁴⁸

The bishops maintained that it was the right and mission of the church to teach. They wanted access to the mass media to carry out this mission (Perón had discontinued Catholic broadcasts, and the Peronist press no longer promoted the church). This letter went on to warn that if a Roman Catholic adopted a position contrary to the church's, he put himself in the camp of the apostates (a threat of excommunication). Citing Rerum Novarum, the episcopacy denied it had neglected social works. It also denied that it wanted political or temporal domination: it only tried to save souls. Recent events it could not be silent about were the prohibition of religious processions and Catholic

⁴⁸ "Pastoral Colectiva del Episcopado Argentino Sobre los Derechos de la Iglesia," March 19, 1955, quoted in Criterio, XXVIII (April 7, 1955), 261-62.

public assemblies, the authorization of propagandists of other religions, the use of radio by other religions when Catholic programs were prohibited, and the removal of public functionaries from their posts for religious reasons. The pastoral ended by giving "our voice of encouragement and comfort" to those who had been imprisoned for the same motives.⁴⁹

The government acted to remove religious festivals as public holidays from the calendar in a decree signed by Perón and all the cabinet ministers. No change was made as regards Christmas and Good Friday, but other religious holidays were given no recognition at all, becoming regular work days. National holidays were to include Eva's death and October 17 (Perón's return from detention in 1945).⁵⁰

The month of April saw the continuation of a flurry of activity in the Ministry of Education that was directed against the church's educational sphere. An April 14 ministerial resolution called for the suspension "momentarily" of religion classes in the national schools under the pretext of arranging to restore them on some different

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Decreto No.3991, March 21, 1955, ALA 1955, XV-A, pp. 98-99.

basis.⁵¹ The episcopacy relied that very day by deploring moves tending to bring about the separation of church and state. It quoted the pastoral of October 3, 1931:

No contentos los propulsores del laicismo con haber expulsado a Dios de las escuelas de la familia, pretenden borrar de las leyes y aun del mismo Código fundamental cuantos vestigios encuentran de la piedad de nuestros mayores⁵²

The Peronist priest Father Virgilio Filippo decried on the floor of the Chamber of Deputies the governmental measures taken to end religious education in the public schools.⁵³ But this had little effect on the deputies who, only the day before, had eliminated the religious oath taken by their prospective members during the swearing in to that Chamber.⁵⁴ All through this month of April, Catholic laymen and priests were detained along with other opponents to the Peron regime.

On Labor Day, May 1, the CGT and Peronist Party dem-

⁵¹Belaunde, p. 57.

⁵²"Declaración de la Comisión Permanente del Episcopado Argentino," April 14, 1955, quoted in Criterio, XXVIII (April 28, 1955), 297.

⁵³García de Loydi, La iglesia frente al peronismo, pp. 41-42.

⁵⁴This was on April 26, 1955. (Tato, p. 523.)

onstrated against the church, calling for its separation from the state and for the definitive suppression of enseñanza religiosa by congressional legislation.⁵⁵ Perón gave a speech the same day in which he rejected clerical pretensions that only the church had the right to care for souls, averring that the state also had such a right because, united, the souls of individual Argentines made up "el alma común de nuestro pueblo."⁵⁶

The church chose to answer Perón this time in a different form: the prosecretary of the Curia replied to the above assertions in a sermon given five days later in the Cathedral. And on May 6th, an anti-Peronist street demonstration organized by ACA took place during rush hour; it was witnessed by thousands of office workers who received anti-Peronist handbills printed on the sub rosa Catholic press.⁵⁷ Unlike previous Catholic demonstrations held to support the church, this one was both militant and specifically anti-Perón--the first of this kind since Perón's election.

⁵⁵Campobassi, Ataque y defensa del laicismo escolar en la Argentina, p. 83.

⁵⁶Gambini, p. 84.

⁵⁷Ibid.

The police arrested many demonstrators and suffered two wounded along with two crippled buses when the Catholics resisted their interfering. In reprisal, the government arrested twenty members of the Junta Central of ACA and closed down ACA's offices. Those detained ACA members were gradually released during May 11-17.⁵⁸

Congress acted in May to remove past privileges of the church. Legislation was introduced to suppress enseñanza religiosa in the national schools. In the Senate, six Peronist senators, all connected with the CGT, presented legislation to this effect. What followed was less of a debate than an explanation on the part of the Peronists as to why they now opposed catechism in the public schools. The bill passed in the Senate on May 11 and was taken up by the Chamber. Peronist deputies accused the church of inciting rebellion against the authorities, encouraging the people "to give to God what is God's and to take from Caesar what is Caesar's."⁵⁹ They accused the clerical teachers of using their posts to criticize Perón and his revolution in a conflict brought about by a bad group of priests rath-

⁵⁸Tato, p. 523.

⁵⁹Deputy Etelvina C. Barreto, DSCD 1955, I, p. 214.

er than the church itself.⁶⁰ The church was charged with using the Ministry of Education for its own selfish ends, and with organizing social organisms--workers and professionals--on confessional lines which clashed with secular Peronist ones.⁶¹

The Radical deputies in the Chamber, long opposed to religious education in the public schools, did not protest its abolition. They could hardly help but taunt the Peronists for this reversal on their part, save for a few labor elements who always had opposed clerical influence. One Radical deputy wondered why Peronism was now suppressing enseñanza religiosa--had electoral opportunism and fraud been so perfected that priests were no longer needed to captivate the masses?⁶² On May 13 this bill was passed by the Chamber, and it became law ten days later.⁶³

Congress then enacted a bill on May 20 that struck at the church's economic privileges. By it, the church and its institutions no longer enjoyed a tax exempt status.

⁶⁰ Deputy Beato Miguel Tejada, ibid., pp. 220-21.

⁶¹ Deputy Raúl C. Bustos Fierro, ibid., pp. 240-41.

⁶² Deputy Raúl Jorge Zarriello, ibid., p. 217.

⁶³ ALA 1955, XV-A, p. 1.

Taxes were imposed on "las instituciones religiosas, a sus templos, conventos, colegios y demás dependencias, a los bienes que posean o a los actos que realicen." This measure was retroactive to January 1, 1955, and affected all religions.⁶⁴

Three days later, Congress passed Ley 14.404, a law that declared the separation of church and state to be necessary and accordingly called for a reform of the Constitution to excise article two and certain other provisions from it so that the state would no longer have to sustain the Roman Catholic religion.⁶⁵

Throughout May, police raids continued against suspected opponents of the regime: anti-Peronist pamphlets were confiscated from churches,⁶⁶ and forty-nine priests were detained.⁶⁷ Commemorative masses traditionally held with government officials to celebrate Argentina's Independence on May 25 were cancelled by the government.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 3.

⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 1-3.

⁶⁶ Gambini, p. 87.

⁶⁷ Tato, p. 523.

⁶⁸ Belaunde, p. 57.

And the Communist and Peronist press persisted in attacking the Roman Catholic press.⁶⁹

In June matters came to a head in the aftermath of an abortive military coup against Perón. The first week of that month, the Argentine episcopacy held a plenary assembly that resulted in a declaration that documented and denounced religious persecution in Argentina. (Publication of this declaration was delayed until July 13.) The suppression of enseñanza religiosa was most lamented, and the church reminded Perón that this had been the "promesa y bandera del programa con que el Partido Peronista solicitó los votos del electorado"; that the episcopacy had not asked for it; and that it was an inalienable right of families and the church to give their children a Christian education.⁷⁰

On June 11 a Corpus Christi celebration was held in the Buenos Aires Cathedral in spite of a government ban against it. An overflow crowd attended and marched through the streets afterward, bearing a Papal flag as well as the

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰"Nuestra Contribución a la Paz de la Patria: Declaración Episcopal Denunciando la Persecución Religiosa en la Argentina," pp. 523-29.

national one. The next day the government accused the Catholic demonstrators of having burned the national flag, and the episcopacy called for an investigation. Peronist mobs surrounded the Cathedral after they learned of the flag burning, while Catholics went inside to worship and defend the Cathedral: the police intervened by arresting 250 male worshippers.⁷¹ The two bishops responsible for the Corpus Christi service, Bishop Manuel Tato, auxiliary bishop for Buenos Aires, and Pablo Novoa, dean of the Cathedral, were arrested a few days later. On June 15 they were expelled from Argentina, an action that determined Perón's excommunication.⁷² Meanwhile, a military investigation revealed that Peronist government officials had burned the flag.⁷³

Perón's Overthrow

On June 16, news of the Vatican's excommunication of Perón and all those responsible for the "crimes" and violence against the church reached Argentina.⁷⁴ Within hours Navy

⁷¹Tato, p. 523.

⁷²Luna, Argentina de Perón a Lanusse, p. 85.

⁷³Evidence of this farce about the flag speeded up the plans for a coup d'état that Navy officers had been making for several weeks. (Ibid.)

⁷⁴Owen, Peron, pp. 226-27.

bomber planes took to the air to bomb the Casa de Gobierno with Perón inside. Perón escaped, having been forewarned by the United States Ambassador,⁷⁵ but several hundred people in the vicinity of the Casa de Gobierno were killed by bombs. Navy troops accompanied by some civilians went to the building to find Perón, but he was not there. Troops loyal to the administration moved in to occupy the Navy Ministry, but before the day was over a new wave of bombings had killed more onlookers. Rebel warships were delayed by fog, and certain rebel Army units held their fire. Loyal troops also captured the airfields, and the uprising was over.⁷⁶

Peronists blamed the church for instigating the Navy to rebel. That night angry Peronist mobs sacked and burned the Curia, with its colonial archives, and the churches of San Ignacio, Santo Domingo, San Francisco, etc.⁷⁷ Regular and secular clerics were rounded up by the police, although they were released on June 18.⁷⁸

⁷⁵Luna, Argentina de Perón a Lanusse, p. 86.

⁷⁶Ibid., pp. 85-86.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 86.

⁷⁸Belaunde, p. 60.

Perón now felt that both sides had gone too far and held out the olive branch. He himself did not accuse the church of participating in the revolt. A staunch Catholic, General Franklin Lucero, was put in charge of restoring order. A ban on public meetings was lifted for church services, and police were assigned to guard churches. Perón also purged his cabinet, sacrificing the Minister of Education among others. Catholic laymen, priests (some of whom had been imprisoned since 1953), and Radicals were released from jail. And a bill was passed in Congress to give 200,000,000 pesos for the repair of the burned churches.⁷⁹

The hierarchy, however, did not allow the Peronists to repair the desecrated churches, indicating its intention not to make up with Perón. The sight of the ravaged churches was mute testimony to the barbarity and immorality of the Perón regime. Perón remained excommunicated. A Roman Catholic march from the Cathedral to the burned out church of San Nicolás, on July 2, likewise indicated that the church could not forget its persecution.⁸⁰ On July 13, a pastoral was read which recalled the persecutions suffered

⁷⁹Owen, pp. 229-32.

⁸⁰José Flores, Operación "Rosa Negra" (Buenos Aires: Editorial Errele, 1956), p. 206.

by the church, and especially dwelt on Perón's attempt to replace the church with what he called an "authentic Christianity."⁸¹ Three other pastorals which had appeared between June 22 and July 6 also recalled the more recent offenses against the church, although the third of these included a call for union and pacification, emulating Perón.⁸² The latter plea may well have reflected the personal views of Cardinal Copello, who still wanted to reconcile with Perón.⁸³

The public was also confused as to the attitude of the episcopacy toward Perón when they disclaimed any connection with the Christian Democratic Party, which took advantage of the political freedom now allowed by the government to announce its formation, although it had actually been founded a year before. The church declared that:

The Argentine Episcopacy has not accepted, nor can it ever accept, any understanding with any

⁸¹ See above, pp. 192-93. This pastoral had been written on June 7, 1955, but was not made public until July 13. (Gambini, pp. 103-04.)

⁸² "Documentos: cartas pastorales del Arzobispo de Buenos Aires con motivo de los últimos sucesos," Criterio, XXVIII (July 14, 1955), 498-99.

⁸³ Copello wanted reconciliation and Cardinal Caggiano was neutral, while the rest of the hierarchy wanted Perón ousted. (Interview with Hermano Septimio, Buenos Aires, September 7, 1972.)

political party to defend the rights and liberties of the Church against the legitimate Government of the nation in any case, even if oppression and persecution continued.⁸⁴

This same cautious attitude was never noted when it came to education. The episcopacy always claimed that it was a right of the church to teach religion in the public schools and to have autonomy for its own religious schools. And furthermore, the church had supported the Peronist Party with pre-election pastorals. Perhaps the bishops were also implicitly recanting their past connection with the Peronist Party, for in reality Catholic laymen and clerics were actively working behind the scenes to link up with other opponents of Perón in order to overthrow him. The burning of the churches had made every Catholic a militant adversary of the government,⁸⁵ and the church now gave the opposition moral force and issues around which long-time opponents of the regime could coalesce.

Perón himself for a time continued his conciliatory stance. On July 6 he had called for national pacification; on July 15 he resigned as head of the Peronist Party; and on July 27 he allowed the Radical leader of this opposing Party, Dr. Arturo Frondizi, to speak on the radio. Frondizi's

⁸⁴Owen, p. 233.

⁸⁵Luna, Argentina de Perón a Lanusse, p. 87.

speech was neither conciliatory toward Perón nor anti-Peronist. He attacked the Conservatives (National Democrats) and did not mention the persecution of the church. Foreign correspondents concluded that Perón had wisely allowed his opponents to speak publicly so that they would quarrel among themselves.⁸⁶ But Frondizi's speech had also outlined a program for political reconstruction of Argentina, calling for a renewal of civil liberties and annulment of the petroleum contracts with Standard Oil. Broadcasts of the leaders of other political parties followed in a similar vein, and it became apparent that the differences with Peron were more irreconcilable than the differences among the opposition parties themselves.⁸⁷

With the loss of church support, Perón could fall back only on labor and the military, and the latter were not truly reliable any more. The more aristocratically-inclined Navy needed little convincing to go against a populist regime as they had demonstrated on June 16. The lesser rank Navy officers who had conspired against Perón on that date had not been purged because the Army had had no stom-

⁸⁶Owen, p. 234.

⁸⁷Luna, Argentina de Perón a Lanusse, pp. 88-89.

ach for it.⁸⁸ The Army began to realize that it was upholding an increasingly unpopular government that was excommunicated, tarnished by foreign oil and investment concessions, and unable to handle Argentina's economic problems. The upper class further brought renewed social pressure to bear on the officers of the military to cast off Perón,⁸⁹ while the church's disavowal of Perón let loose "the natural opposition of the upper and middle classes, particularly among the women."⁹⁰

On the 31st of August, Perón used a ruse to enlist labor and his remaining military support in a new campaign to crush his opponents. That morning he tendered his resignation as President to the Peronist Party and CGT but not to the only body--Congress--constitutionally authorized to accept or reject such an offer. The Peronist Party and CGT, which called an immediate general strike, demanded that Perón remain in office. That evening Perón bowed to the will of the people and withdrew his resignation. He vitriolically denounced his opponents and authorized the

⁸⁸Sidney Lens, "But What About Peronism?" Christian Century, LXXII (November 2, 1955), 1267.

⁸⁹Luna, Argentina de Perón a Lanusse, pp. 87-88.

⁹⁰Friedenberg, "Peron! Peron! Peron!" New Republic, p. 14.

use of violence to suppress "the enemies of the regime."⁹¹ Perón plainly counted on the Army to help him squash his enemies, and the Army's role was reinforced by Congress' declaring a "state of siege" in Buenos Aires on September 2. The Army general placed in charge of public safety listed offenses such as the unauthorized possession of arms, ammunition and explosives, the spreading of rumors either orally or in writing, the distribution of subversive pamphlets or other publications, and unauthorized meetings and demonstrations--which would be "repressed with the utmost severity."⁹² On that same day, in a separate speech to the Peronist Party, Perón charged that the oligarchy had rejected his offer of political pacification, and he threatened a "war to the death" against his enemies.⁹³

Perón's violent words spread a wave of terror among his opponents and made them work harder for his downfall.⁹⁴ The Army did not look forward to being a repressive force for a government that had lost its moral fiber and was be-

⁹¹ Owen, pp. 234-35.

⁹² Ibid., p. 235.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 236.

⁹⁴ Luna, Argentina de Perón a Lanusse, p. 90.

coming paralyzed by its corruption and inefficiency. This was recognized by the CGT, which was clearly calling for the arming of its six million members as a civilian militia. This menace to the monopoly of force enjoyed by the military further egged on the conspirators in the armed services.⁹⁵ The clandestine Catholic press on its part attacked the proposal to arm the workers, and urged the military to overthrow Perón.⁹⁶

On September 16, General Eduardo Lonardi, a devout Catholic who had recently attended a meeting between military conspirators and Roman Catholic priests, headed an uprising in Córdoba. It was aided by Roman Catholic groups who manned radio broadcasts under the code name "rosa negra":⁹⁷ these insurgent-controlled broadcasts were important because they could discount government propaganda that the rebels were being defeated. Garrisons in Entre Ríos and Corrientes joined those in Córdoba in concerted actions, and the South of Argentina soon came under rebel control when troops in that section of the country joined Lonardi's Provisional

⁹⁵Carleton Beals, "Who Won in Argentina?" Nation, CLXXXI (October, 1955), 275.

⁹⁶Flores, p. 255.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 279.

Government. The Navy joined in its entirety, and so did the military stationed in Rosario. Only those troops located in Buenos Aires remained loyal to Perón, but their generals advised him to yield. On September 19, Perón sought and received asylum from Paraguay, and the battle was over.⁹⁸ The head of the triumphant Provisional Government came to the federal capital and addressed a huge crowd in the Plaza de Mayo on September 23.⁹⁹ In this discourse, General Lonardi underscored his own regard for the church:

Será mi preocupación constante mantener inalterables el respeto y la garantía de los derechos de la Iglesia y la conciencia religiosa de todos, sea cual fuera su credo.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸Owen, pp. 237-43.

⁹⁹Among those who greeted Lonardi were Cardinal Copello and leading church dignitaries. (Ibid., p. 241.)

¹⁰⁰Flores, p. 303.

CHAPTER EIGHT

EDUCATIONAL POLICY OF THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT:

1955-1956

Lonardi, who lasted fifty days as Provisional President, had promised he would respect the religious conscience of all; he also promised that there would be neither victors nor vanquished ("ni vencedores ni vencidos")¹: and he promised to restore democratic political process to Argentina.² These promises would be hard to keep because there were many who clamored for revenge. "The two major interest groups which had overthrown Perón were the army and the church, and neither of these was liberal in principle nor were the numbers among its leaders large who were convinced of the advantages of a liberal political order as distinct from a liberal society."³

Lonardi was identified as a deeply religious Catholic, who was sure that Divine Providence guided him when he led

¹This was the motto of Lonardi's administration. (Luis Ernesto Lonardi, Dios es justo /Buenos Aires: Francisco A. Colombo, 1958, pp. 366, 374-76.)

²Luna, Argentina de Perón a Lanusse, p. 97.

³Ferns, Argentina, p. 206.

the revolution against Perón.⁴ Lonardi had married into a prominent and very Catholic family from Córdoba, Villada Achával.⁵ His intimate circle was made up of militant Catholics such as presidential advisor and relative Clemente Villada Achával and Minister of Education Atilio Dell'Oro Maini, and he was linked with nationalist Catholic sectors of Córdoba.⁶ At his swearing-in ceremony as Provisional President of Argentina on September 23, 1955, he stated that he was anxious to stabilize church-state relations with a Concordat:

En lo que concierne a la Iglesia Católica, me sentiré muy feliz si la Providencia me depara-se la oportunidad de poner fin a todos los malentendidos mediante la concertación de un Concordato. No tenemos por qué cargar indefinitivamente con la consecuencia de viejos errores, definitivamente superados por los hechos y las ideas del presente.⁷

Lonardi's administration was short-lived, and he did not get around to a Concordat with the church. However, he did issue decrees that abrogated Perón's anti-

⁴Lonardi, p. 205.

⁵Interview with José Luis Romero, Adrogué, July 20, 1972.

⁶Luna, Argentina de Perón a Lanusse, p. 99; and interview with Romero, Adrogué, July 20, 1972.

⁷Lonardi, p. 220.

church legislation and returned former privileges to the church. On October 8, for example, Lonardi restored certain religious holidays to the calendar.⁸ Four days earlier he had annulled the Peronist law that forced religious institutions to pay property and income taxes; again, churches of all faiths were to enjoy tax exemptions.⁹ On October 24 he restored to the Catholic schools Colegio del Salvador in Buenos Aires and Colegio de la Inmaculada Concepción in Santa Fé the autonomy that the former had received from the military dictatorship in 1943 and lost on December 10, 1954.¹⁰

This last decree was anti-laic and showed a partiality toward the church that threatened to be manifested in more decrees. Laicists and liberals were maddened by some of Lonardi's Catholic advisors who were considered "clericales neo-fascistas."¹¹ Military officers wanted Argentina de-Peronized and called for government intervention of the CGT, as did the political parties sitting on the Junta

⁸D. Ley 554, October 8, 1955, ALA 1955, XV-A, p. 529.

⁹D. Ley 317, October 4, 1955, ibid., p. 518.

¹⁰D. 1757, October 24, 1955, ibid., pp. 556-57.

¹¹E. F. Sanchez Zinny, El culto de la infamia (Buenos Aires: Artes Gráficas Bartolomé U. Chesino, 1958), pp. 631-32.

Consultiva.¹² This body had been created by Lonardi, who appointed leaders of the political parties opposed to Perón to it in order to provide an element of popular representation and mollify the appearance of a larger military dictatorship. On the evening of November 12, a delegation of officers of the armed forces interrupted Lonardi's supper and demanded that he eject from his government known Catholic nationalists such as his advisors Major Juan Francisco Guevara and Villada Achával, Minister of Transportation General Urango, and the Minister of the Interior Dr. Luis María de Pablo Pardo. The visiting officers asked him to change his intimate circle of advisors and ministers, citing Lonardi's speech of November 12, which was viewed as too lenient towards the Peronist Party, and the right-wing nationalist character of his government. They claimed that the civilians on the Junta Consultiva had resigned, and that the Supreme Court was ready to do the same.¹³

The next day Lonardi's resignation was announced, and General Pedro Eugenio Aramburu took his place as Provisional President. But policy toward the church seemed

¹²Luna, Argentina de Perón a Lanusse, pp. 98-101.

¹³Lonardi, pp. 236-43.

to keep the same course, and the ultra-Catholic Dell'Oro Maini remained as Minister of Education. On November 24, 1955, the Aramburu government exempted religious institutions from paying municipal taxes in Buenos Aires; this was made retroactive to January 1.¹⁴ Another decree on November 30 abrogated Perón's 1954 Estatuto del Docente and promised that the Ministry of Education would draw up a new Statute.¹⁵ In a list of government intentions, "Directivas Básicas del 7 de diciembre de 1955," Aramburu and his cabinet touched upon the church:

h) Mantener inalterable el respeto a la conciencia religiosa de todos, garantizando la libertad de cultos. Asegurar los derechos de la Iglesia católica contemplando la posibilidad de la concertación de un concordato sobre relaciones con el Estado;¹⁶

Aramburu was even continuing Lonardi's goal of arriving at a Concordat with the Vatican.

No Religious Education in the Public Schools

The church's spokesmen had been calling for a Concordat to stabilize church-state relations since Perón's

¹⁴D. 3665, November 24, 1955, ALA 1955, XV-A, p. 592.

¹⁵D. 4227, November 30, 1955, ibid., pp. 606-07.

¹⁶ALA 1956, XVI-A, p. 3.

first administration. A Concordat was seen as an instrument to clarify the church's educational role, guaranteeing the right of the church not only to have its own schools, but to have the degrees granted by them recognized by the state, and, secondly, formalizing the establishment of religious education in the public schools.¹⁷

Aramburu did appoint an ambassador to the Vatican, heightening speculation that a Concordat would be forthcoming.¹⁸

In the end, none was negotiated, but the question of religious education in the schools nevertheless became a center of public controversy once again.

Within a month of Perón's ejection, the Argentine episcopacy had issued a pastoral letter calling on the faithful to conduct their apostolic activities through Acción Católica or in collaboration with the bishops and priests of the church.¹⁹ Acción Católica Argentina and related groups such as the Liga de Padres and Liga de Madres began an intense radio campaign supplemented by magazine

¹⁷Casiello, Iglesia y estado en la argentina, pp. 351-53.

¹⁸"Estrechan lazos la Argentina y la Santa Sede," La Nación, February 12, 1956, p. 1.

¹⁹"El episcopado argentino dió una pastoral," La Nación, October 22, 1955, p. 1

and poster publicity to mobilize public opinion in support of enseñanza religiosa.²⁰ There can be no doubt that Lonardi personally also favored it. However, in an address of November 12, he spoke of the government's assuming an "actitud mesurada" toward the church, and as being responsible and not hurrying decisions that "incitan a la polémica apasionada o que puedan producir grietas."²¹

General Aramburu, Lonardi's successor in November 1955, was even less inclined to reinstate religious education. Personally he was opposed to religion classes in the schools, being a free-thinker and heading the Liberal faction in the armed forces.²² Moreover, he wanted the support of the political parties. The parties that represented so many Argentines, the Radicals and Socialists, were just as opposed as ever to enseñanza religiosa in the public schools in 1955-58 as they had been in 1943-54. The party of many other Argentines, the Peronist, excluded from participating in this government, was still in opposition to

²⁰"Aclaración," La Vanguardia, February 23, 1956, p. 1.

²¹Lonardi. pp. 207, 213, 232-33.

²²Interview with Américo Ghioldi, Buenos Aires, August 15, 1972.

the church. Only the smaller National Democratic (Conservative) and Christian Democratic Parties were supporters of religious education in the schools. On March 6, 1956, therefore, the Provisional Government reinstated Ley 1420, reaffirming the lay school.²³

Provinces.--Peronist measures had suppressed enseñanza religiosa in the provincial schools in emulation of the measures of the national government.²⁴ When Aramburu reinstated the provincial constitutions that existed before Perón's regime, most provinces proceeded with plans to draw up new constitutions by calling conventions for that purpose. The church worked on the provincial level to influence these new constitutions and to convince law-makers to implant religious education in the provincial schools. The church met with qualified success in Santa Cruz in keeping laicism out of a provincial constitution: its new constitution only said that "la enseñanza será gratuita y obligatoria."²⁵

The church also had success when many provinces re-

²³Campobassi, Ataque y defensa del laicismo escolar en la Argentina, p. 91.

²⁴Ibid., p. 95.

²⁵Ibid., p. 94.

adopted the education laws in force before Perón's conflict with the church, which implanted enseñanza religiosa in the public schools. However, the Provisional Government did block the federal interventor of Córdoba from re-implanting religious education in that province's schools. The Province of Buenos Aires kept the Peronist measures that abolished it, and the Province of Salta returned to a previous law calling for the obligatory teaching of religion in the schools only to decree its abolition in April 1956.²⁶

Democratic Education.--The Provisional Government was more interested in wiping out the effects of Peronist education than in giving religious education. On the anniversary of Perón's 1945 return from detention, Decree 1023 of October 17, 1955 suppressed the teaching of National Doctrine; it was soon reinforced by another decree of November 29, 1955. In its place was put "Educación Democrática"--a kind of civic education that was to inculcate democratic values.²⁷ While the curriculum for these courses was being drawn up for every grade, a proclamation of April

²⁶Campobassi, p. 95.

²⁷D. 7625, December 30, 1955, ALA 1956, XVI-A, pp. 59-61.

27, 1956, reinstated the national Constitution of 1853 and the provincial constitutions that existed prior to Perón's presidency.²⁸ In mid-1956 the curriculum for Democratic Education was formulated for the primary grades, junior high grades (ciclo básico), and secondary, special, and normal schools. For the higher grades it included a study of the national Constitution along with studies of demagogy, anti-democratic forms, electoral and parliamentary procedures, civic virtues, federalism, and the United Nations.²⁹

Expansion of the Roman Catholic School System

Uncertain about the future of religious education after 1955, the church turned its attention to building up its own school system. The conformist church linked to the upper classes was once again in the ascendancy, and the "church of the CGT" which in the thesis of Di Tella had come to the fore in the Perón years was now out of favor. Traditionally, it was the former that was most disposed to support private education, especially at the secondary level.³⁰

²⁸ "Proclama del 27 de abril de 1956," ibid., pp. 1-2.

²⁹ D. 9086, May 22, 1956, and D. 10.632, June 15, 1956, ibid., pp. 470-75, 500-01.

³⁰ Di Tella, "Raíces de la controversia educacional argentina," Los fragmentos del poder, pp. 316-17.

The subsidies for private schools which had been cancelled by the Perón government were restored. Citing the "aporte estatal" promised to private schools by Ley 13.047, the Estatuto del Docente of 1947, over \$10.5 million pesos were distributed to private, mainly religious, schools that were due for the years 1953 and 1954. In addition, over 52 million pesos were pledged to the private schools for 1955.³¹ Thus the state was reassuming its financial commitment to the private school sector.

Thanks to this aid as well as its own efforts, the private sector expanded its school system after 1955. This boom especially took place on the secondary level. From 1956 to April 1958, more than 100 new Catholic secondary schools were founded,³² as CONSUDEC (Consejo Superior de Educación Católica) pushed to bring adolescents into religious schools. In 1955, 41% of the students enrolled in secondary schools that led to the bachillerato were in private schools, and by 1958 this percentage had increased to 52%.³³ The figures for the proliferation of private normal

³¹D. Ley 7237, December 28, 1955, ALA 1956, XVI-A, pp. 40-41.

³²"Educación," Revista Eclesiástica Argentina, I (March-April, 1958), 86.

³³Di Tella, p. 314.

schools are even more striking: in 1955, 45% of normal school students were enrolled in private schools; by 1958, this figure had risen to 69%.³⁴ The expansion of the private sector on the primary level was slower because the church did not concentrate its efforts at this level. As for the public sector, enrollments at all levels increased slowly in comparison to the Peronist years.³⁵

The proliferation of Catholic normal schools was further abetted by a decree issued on April 28, 1958, two days before the end of the Provisional Government. This decree, signed by Aramburu and the acting Minister of Education Alberto Mercier, contravened article 305 of President Alvear's 1927 ruling on the Law of Secondary Education (Ley 934) by allowing Catholic normal schools to incorporate with public normal schools, which gave them the autonomy to grant their degrees without their students submitting to state examinations.³⁶

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Argentina, Ministerio de Cultura y Educación, "Alumnos matriculados: años 1900-1971" (mimeographed page, Buenos Aires: Departamento de Estadística Educativa, 1972).

³⁶Ghioldi, Libertad de enseñanza, pp. 91-97.

The Universities: Moves to Change the Law

The university students could well expect some reward, having been among the most consistent opponents of the Perón regime. When Perón was toppled, the leadership of the Federación Universitaria de Buenos Aires (FUBA) resolved to occupy the University of Buenos Aires on September 21. The student federations at the other five national universities copied FUBA, occupying and administering the buildings and faculties of their universities. After occupying the buildings, the students made it clear that they expected the Provisional Government to accede to their demands, as a reward for their opposition to Perón.³⁷

The students demanded that they participate in the elections of university authorities. FUBA called for the full restoration of individual rights and constitutional guarantees, the repeal of repressive legislation, the destruction of Perón's espionage and police system, and the reopening of student centers. Students especially wanted an end to the arbitrary hiring and firing of professors ("Professors Yes, Stooges No"), and an end to governmental interventions of universities. FUA (Federación Universitaria Argentina), the umbrella organization of all student

³⁷Walter, Student Politics in Argentina, pp. 157-58.

federations, called for university autonomy, free and secular education, and academic freedom.³⁸

At first, the Provisional Government met student demands. On September 29, Lonardi appointed Dr. José Luis Romero as interventor in the University of Buenos Aires, and he promised to restore university autonomy.³⁹ On October 7, Decree 477 of the Lonardi administration reestablished the Ley Avellaneda.⁴⁰ On that same day, Decree 478 announced that eventually all university posts would be filled through open competition, although in the interim federal interventors would appoint personnel.⁴¹ On November 4, Decree-Law 2538⁴² authorized interventors to reassign professors to their original positions if they had been expelled or had resigned for political reasons during 1943-46, as well as those professors who had more recently been expelled or had resigned; this was meant to include professors who had been staunch Catholics and, therefore, separated from the uni-

³⁸ Ibid., p. 158.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 159.

⁴⁰ ALA 1955, XV-A, p. 521.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 521-22.

⁴² Ibid., p. 576.

versities in the last year of Perón's regime.⁴³

The maneuvers of the Provisional Government made autonomy less than complete. After all, Aramburu had come to power backed by civilians and militarists who wanted to remove all Peronists from positions of power. With interventors of Socialist and liberal sympathies often placed in charge of the faculties by the Catholic Minister of Education Dell'Oro Maini, a purge of Peronist professors began. These purges were abetted by a ministerial resolution of November 4 which called upon interventors to submit nominations for professorial posts to the Chief Executive, thus chipping away at autonomy. Furthermore, Decree 4361 of November 30, 1955, allowed interventors to remove professors for reasons of university restructuring.⁴⁴ Complaints of government interference in university affairs led to Decree-Law 5150 which stipulated that interventors were authorized only to fill positions which were vacant "como excepción y cuando así lo requiera el cumplimiento de funciones indispensables de cada universidad."⁴⁵

⁴³Terrén de Ferro, "Educación: la universidad actual y su autonomía," p. 461.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵D. Ley 5150, December 9, 1955, ALA 1955, XV-A, p. 624.

Those now in control of the university system were predisposed to identify militant Catholics with those who had subjugated the universities in 1943 and had replaced professors ejected in 1946. Thus, many Catholics were purged from the universities along with Peronists. Many were eliminated under the criterion that they had "ethical-civic" flaws, such as adherence to the 1949 Peronist Constitution, support of Perón's re-election, and the wooing of an honorary doctorate. But comparable considerations were not taken into account when dealing with persons of a liberal or Socialist background, who received posts especially in the faculties of Exact Sciences and Philosophy and Letters (primarily in Sociology and Psychology).⁴⁶

Decree 6403

Under these circumstances Decree 6403, signed by Aramburu and his whole Cabinet, was issued on December 23, 1955, reorganizing the universities.⁴⁷ By it, the method of selecting professors was not changed for the present, but it was provided that intervention would end. The de-

⁴⁶ Bergadá, Argentine Survey S.J.: II--situación educacional, Part 2, pp. 260-61.

⁴⁷ D. 6403, December 23, 1955, ALA 1956, XVI-A, pp. 17-21.

cree foresaw reimplantation--once autonomy was restored-- of the method of choosing professors by concurso, and with "ethical-civic" considerations to be taken into account even then. Autonomy would be recognized after elections were held according to a tripartite system by which professors, students, and alumni shared power.⁴⁸ Accordingly, a University Assembly was elected in late 1957, and drew up its own statutes in 1958, restoring autonomy to the University of Buenos Aires;⁴⁹ similar elections took place in all national universities. However, student groups were dissatisfied because they had not been consulted in the drafting of the decree, and because article 28 would allow the establishment of private Catholic universities, not directly controlled by the state, and capable of granting professional licenses. Article 28, which so irritated the students, read as follows:

Private initiative can create free universities which will be qualified to issue diplomas and titles which will always be subject to conditions expressed by a regulation that will be dictated opportunely.⁵⁰

⁴⁸Terrén de Ferro, p. 464.

⁴⁹Tulio Halperín Donghi, Historia de la Universidad de Buenos Aires (Buenos Aires: EUDEBA, 1962), pp. 205-07.

⁵⁰Walter, p. 159.

This decree was issued while the students were on their summer vacation, giving them little chance to oppose it until they returned to classes. Their reaction will be discussed later in this chapter.

Catholics and the Decree

Previous attempts to found private universities had been made by Catholics in the time of Estrada and during the first two decades of the twentieth century in the city of Buenos Aires. The last attempt failed because degrees were not legally recognized for the practice of professional careers. For this same reason, the universities founded by the Socialists and Radicals did not outlast the Perón era, and were only established for purposes of academic freedom.⁵¹ Article 28 was once again the work of Catholics, and sectors of Catholic opinion, including the Humanists, were united in its behalf. The new campaign for private universities had in fact begun before the Provisional Government was a month old, spurred by the Vatican. The papacy was promoting Catholic universities all over the world, and the Argentine hierarchy sought to comply.⁵² In the first month-

⁵¹See above, chapter 2, p. 57, and chapter 5, pp. 136-37.

⁵²Interview with Dr. Jorge Mejía, Buenos Aires, August 22, 1972.

ly meeting of university rectors-interventors held after the revolution in September 1955, with the presence of Minister of Education Dell'Oro Maini, the need for private universities was forcefully presented by Dr. Augustín Caeiro,⁵³ a militant Catholic from Córdoba and admirer of the United States system of higher education, who had been appointed by Lonardi as head of the national University of Córdoba in the first days of the revolution, while Lonardi was still in Córdoba.⁵⁴

Similar views were expressed by Dell'Oro Maini himself in a speech given in the Department of Philosophy and Letters of the University of Buenos Aires on October 1, 1955:

El Estado no tiene el monopolio de la verdad,
de la ciencia y de la educación. . . .⁵⁵

He went on to say that it was necessary to give the private sector a clear path in higher education without diminishing the "garantías" for professional titles.⁵⁶ This speech

⁵³ Interview with Romero, Adrogué, July 20, 1972.

⁵⁴ Interview with Mejía, Buenos Aires, August 22, 1972.

⁵⁵ "Educación y libertad," Criterio, XXXI (September 25, 1958), 683.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

was in keeping with the philosophy of Dell'Oro Maini, a staunch Catholic who had co-founded the Cursos Católicos, predecessors of the Universidad Católica.⁵⁷

In November 1955, the Federation of Catholic Students of the University of Tucumán sponsored a conference on free, or private, universities. Leaders from professorial, alumni, and student groups were invited because the Catholics hoped to make this conference representative of the whole university. Since it was seen as an attempt on the part of Catholics to promote the establishment of private institutions of higher education, many invitees refused to attend.⁵⁸ Not unexpectedly, this Catholic-sponsored meeting agreed with Dell'Oro Maini that there should be private universities. These "Jornadas de Tucumán" also tackled the problem of "títulos habilitantes," or titles that allowed one to practice a profession, as well as the problem of public financing of private universities. The conferees sought to allay the fears of partisans of the

⁵⁷ Dell'Oro Maini also founded Criterio, a magazine which reflected the church's position and was taken over by the hierarchy, and was past president of the Liga de la Juventud Católica.

⁵⁸ Interview with Romero, Adrogué, July 20, 1972.

national universities with the following conclusions:

Las Universidades Privadas otorgarán diplomas o grados académicos, pero no podrán expedir títulos habilitantes para el ejercicio de las profesiones liberales, cuya regimentación es exclusiva del Estado, ni tampoco recibir subsidios del mismo.⁵⁹

Opponents assumed that private universities, even without habilitating titles, would be an opening wedge, and that the training they offered would be inferior to that in the national universities. The Liga Humanista did not share this fear of private universities and approved Dell'Oro Maini's article 28. When FUBA tried to force Dell'Oro Maini's resignation in December 1955, the Humanistas publicized that they "energetically oppose said request for resignation."⁶⁰ The Humanistas not only opposed the boycotts and demonstrations organized by FUA but in due course forced the resignation of Romero as rector of the University of Buenos Aires in revenge for FUA's achieving Dell'Oro Maini's resignation as Minister of Education in May 1956.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Domingorena, Artículo 28: universidades privadas en la Argentina: sus antecedentes, pp. 157-58.

⁶⁰ Walter, p. 161.

⁶¹ Interview with Romero, Adrogué, July 20, 1972.

Meanwhile ACA (Acción Católica Argentina) was also campaigning for private universities under the slogan of "libertad de enseñanza." APAC (Agrupación de los Profesionales y Estudiantes de Acción Católica), the fifth branch of ACA, formed in 1952 of secondary and university students and professionals, took the lead in mobilizing Catholics for this battle, working closely with the Minister of Education Dell'Oro Maini.⁶²

Simultaneously, Catholic laymen were organized into an Asociación por la Libertad de Enseñanza (Association for Educational Freedom) on October 27, 1955, in Buenos Aires. This lay group had affiliates in Argentina's interior and was also associated with the International Union for Educational Freedom which supported Vatican policy.⁶³ This local organization busily published pamphlets in support of private education in Argentina, oftentimes using reprints of articles in Criterio opposing Law 1420 and the "state monopoly of education," or promoting "libertad de

⁶² Interview with José Iglesias, Secretary General of the Junta Central of ACA, Buenos Aires, August 18, 1972.

⁶³ Interview with Carlos Caballero, Secretary of the Asociación por la Libertad de Enseñanza, Buenos Aires, July 4, 1972.

enseñanza." As a lobby, the Asociación sought interviews with each Minister of Education, informing him of the principles of "educational freedom," convened assemblies, and maintained contacts with parents, teachers, and political authorities toward the same end.⁶⁴ In September 1956, for example, the Asociación sponsored a course for teachers and principals in which Professor Carlos Olivera Lahore lectured on subjects such as "Problemas inmediatos de la campaña por la libertad de enseñanza" and "La libertad de enseñanza como exigencia de la democracia argentina."⁶⁵

Reaction to Article 28

National University Rectors, Professors, and Students

The rector of Argentina's largest national university, José Luis Romero of the University of Buenos Aires, protested in a note of December 28, 1955, against the new university decree, including article 28.⁶⁶ He also pro-

⁶⁴Asociación por la Libertad de Enseñanza, Declaración de principios (monograph, Buenos Aires, October 27, 1955), pp. 1-4.

⁶⁵"Información: vida cultural: cursillo sobre la libertad de enseñanza," Criterio, XXIX (October 11, 1956), 755.

⁶⁶Deputy Américo Ghioldi, DSCD 1958, VI, p. 4451.

tested against article 28 in a letter to La Nación, reasoning that it distracted from the need to rehabilitate higher education in Argentina, that there were not enough resources and materials to renew the existing universities which were for everybody, and that there would be time later for dissidents to group themselves into private universities. He also saw a connection between enseñanza religiosa and the private universities:

El problema de lo que ~~ahora~~ se llama enseñanza libre es exactamente igual a lo que en otros tiempos fué conocido como problema de la enseñanza religiosa; y a nadie se le oculta a qué extremos de beligerancia puede conducir el plantearlo.⁶⁷

In other words, private universities would be Catholic, dedicated to indoctrinating students in the teachings of the church.

Mysteriously, Romero lapsed into silence on the issue after publication of this letter, a silence which lasted until 1958.⁶⁸ The other national university rectors

⁶⁷Romero, "Defensa de la universidad," La Nación, February 12, 1956, p. 4.

⁶⁸Américo Ghioldi surmised that Romero made a deal with Dell'Oro Maini when Dell'Oro Maini visited him at his home in Adrogué, and that is why Romero kept quiet. (Interview with Ghioldi, Buenos Aires, August 15, 1972.) Dell'Oro Maini claimed that Romero knew about article 28 before it was decreed, but did not protest it then. (Interview with Dell'Oro Maini, Buenos Aires, August 21, 1972.)

remained silent for the most part too. In all probability, they saw no need to fuss because it appeared that article 28 would never be implemented. When the possibility of its implementation did become imminent in 1958, the rectors did protest.

Some individual rectors, professors, and student groups did object to article 28, however, in the 1956-58 period, besides the one and only protest of Romero. A professor at the University of Buenos Aires, José María Monner Sans, gave a speech in Mar del Plata in mid-February 1956, exhorting students to strike at the beginning of classes if the Minister of Education insisted on private universities and made enseñanza religiosa optional in the schools.⁶⁹ In turn, Mons. Franceschi warned in the pages of Criterio that while Roman Catholicism did not begin this conflict, they would fight if pressed.⁷⁰ Professors at the national universities generally opposed article 28, with the exception of those professors who were active Catholics and planned to work in the private universities. They joined

⁶⁹Franceschi, "Universidades libres," Criterio, XXIX (February 23, 1956), 124.

⁷⁰Ibid.

with the students who were seeking the resignation of Dell'Oro as Minister of Education.⁷¹

Although students were on summer vacation from December to March 1956, the FUBA managed to go on record as opposed to article 28 by asking the Provisional Government not to implement it. Its declaration explained:

No corresponde al Gobierno Provisional surgido de la Revolución decidir cuestiones que no hagan a la esencia misma de los objetivos revolucionarios. El problema de la educación debe dejarse para que la solventen las Cámaras de un Gobierno legítimamente constituido.⁷²

Laicists

Also in January 1956, the Junta Pro-Democratización de la Enseñanza made public a document that opposed article 28. This Junta consisted of the Agrupación Reformista de Egresados Democráticos de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, the Colegios de Graduados de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, the Federación de Estudiantes Secundarios, the Acción Laica Argentina, the Liga de Cultura Laica, the important teachers' union Confederación de Maestros, the Comisión de Padres Pro-Enseñanza Laica, the Centro de

⁷¹Terrén de Ferro, p. 461.

⁷²La Vanguardia, January 23, 1956, as quoted in Alberto Kaufmann, "Comentarios: la 'F.U.B.A.' en contradicción," Estudios, XLVII, no. 498 (October, 1958), 638.

Profesores Diplomados de Enseñanza Secundaria, the Comité Pro-Defensa del Laicismo y la Libertad, and the Ateneo Liberal Argentina. Other groups later affiliated themselves to this Junta. The Junta released a document on January 23 and 24 rebuking article 28 on the following grounds:

- 1) the decree to re-organize university education was issued by surprise and not debated;
- 2) a congress should democratically decide the educational problem;
- 3) a democratic state should assure unrestricted knowledge and discussion to its youth; and
- 4) the state had the right to form free citizens and to control titles ⁷³that habilitate one to practice a profession⁷³.

The Supreme Court

Mario Brandi asked for a ruling on article 28 in Argentina's highest court.⁷⁴ In similar cases in 1928 and 1929, the Supreme Court of Argentina had ruled that a private university title did not merit state habilitation, i.e., the right to practice the profession for which the

⁷³ "Enseñanza laica," La Vanguardia, January 26, 1956, p. 1.

⁷⁴ Florentino V. Sanguinetti, "Las universidades privadas," in La reforma universitaria 1918-1958 (Buenos Aires: Federación Universitaria de Buenos Aires, 1959), p. 220.

title was granted, since the existing Ley Avellaneda ensured that only the state or national universities could grant titles that allowed one to work in that profession. Now, in the Brandi case, the Court ruled similarly on February 3, 1956, that article 28 of decree 6402 was in conflict with article 1 of the law which gave only the national universities the right to grant habilitating titles.⁷⁵

The Junta Consultiva

The ruling of the Supreme Court indicated that the national Constitution was not standing in the way of private universities, but only laws and decrees subsequently enacted. Dell'Oro Maini's next step was to get the adherence of the Junta Consultiva⁷⁶ to the new decree before he and the Provisional Government implemented it. Created by Lonardi, this political body was given a larger voice by Aramburu. It included National Democrats, Radicals, Progressive Democrats, Socialists, and Christian Democrats. The Communists had no representative named to the Junta, and concentrated on building up their strength in the unions.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Ghioldi, Libertad de enseñanza, pp. 132-37, 162-63.

⁷⁶ See above, pp. 222-23.

⁷⁷ Luna, Argentina de Perón a Lanusse, pp. 103-04.

On February 29, 1956, the Junta Consultiva considered article 28 in its eighth extraordinary session,⁷⁸ inviting Minister of Education Dell'Oro Maini to outline his university policy. Dell'Oro Maini's explanation was critical to the approval of the decree by the politicians on the Junta Consultiva. He emphasized that the state would not give any money to the private universities and that the state's competent organs would validate and control the professional titles of graduates of private universities, two qualifications not yet written into the decree's article 28. Dell'Oro Maini played down the public agitation over the problem, and said that he had been moved by the spirit of the university and not by a political or confessional spirit.⁷⁹

Dell'Oro Maini's flat reassurances seem to have satisfied the members of the Junta Consultiva, and Socialist Party representative Ghioldi in the interest of national peace no longer sought his resignation.⁸⁰ Yet, the Socialists and Radicals deplored the public unrest over article 28 and divisions created among Argentines, and they criti-

⁷⁸DSCD 1958, VI, pp. 4422-52.

⁷⁹Ibid., pp. 4447-50.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 4450.

cized the "surprise" announcement of the decree since the Directivas Básicas of Aramburu had contained no inkling of this article.⁸¹ But at the end of the extraordinary session they implicitly approved Decree 6402 including article 28, on the understanding that the state would control professional titles and would not finance in any way these private universities.⁸²

Student Demonstrations

The national university students returned from vacation in March 1956, unhappy about article 28. Dell'Oro Maini had already appointed a Special Committee on February 25, 1956, to analyze ways in which article 28 could be implemented.⁸³ In April and May, students began to demonstrate against the new university law and its article 28, protesting in front of government buildings and boycotting classes. Secondary students joined university students in their protests: they demanded that the University Decree of Decem-

⁸¹ Directive "j" promised to live up to the Ley Avellaneda by giving "vigencia a la autonomia universitaria," Directivas Básicas del 7 de diciembre de 1955, as quoted in Anales de legislación argentina 1956, XVI-A, p. 33.

⁸² DSCD 1958, VI, pp. 4424-52.

⁸³ Speech by Deputy Ruben Víctor Manuel Blanco, ibid., p. 4209.

ber 1955 be revised and its implementation postponed until a constitutional government replaced the provisional one; and, article 28 was to be annulled.⁸⁴

Counter-demonstrations were waged by students of the Catholic schools of El Salvador, Lasalle, and Champanant. Acción Católica Argentina, Ligas de Padres de Familia, university student groups of Catholics such as the Ateneos and Humanistas, marched in opposition to the groups who wished to repeal article 28. They were supported by the Christian Democrats and National Democrat parties which charged that the laicos were led by Marxist and Trotskyite elements.⁸⁵

Violence and truancy from school mounted. FUA met with Provisional President Aramburu and asked for Dell'Oro Maini's resignation. They chanted "Dell'Oro al Vaticano" during demonstrations while the libres (pro private, or "free," universities) chanted "Romero a Moscú." On May 12, the government announced the resignation of Dell'Oro

⁸⁴"La juventud estudiantil se movió por moviles propios," La Vanguardia, May 17, 1956, p. 1.

⁸⁵"El sismo nacionalista de noviembre y la réplica de mayo," La Vanguardia, May 17, 1956, p. 1.

Maini.⁸⁶ In turn, Romero had to resign as rector of the University of Buenos Aires, giving rise to the accusation that the government was using the tactic of tit for tat, i.e., Romero's resignation for Dell'Oro Maini's.⁸⁷ But, more significant for the demonstrating students, the government had decided that the issue of private universities was so divisive that it could not be settled by a decree, and that implementation of article 28 would have to wait until an elected Congress took office.⁸⁸

⁸⁶Dell'Oro Maini was in Lima, Peru, for meetings when he resigned. He later claimed that he did not want to be a cause for division among Argentine youth. (Interview with Dell'Oro Maini, Buenos Aires, August 21, 1972.)

⁸⁷"El sacrificio de José Luis Romero," La Vanguardia, May 24, 1956, p. 3. This article also charged that the tactic of tit for tat had been used when Ley 1420 was reinstated coincidentally with the abolition of the divorce law.

⁸⁸Interview with Américo Ghioldi, Buenos Aires, August 15, 1972.

CHAPTER NINE

PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES FOUNDED AND DEFENDED

Catholic Universities Formed

A sign that private universities would be recognized by the state was that the Provisional Government did not dissuade the Catholic Church of Argentina from establishing universities. In fact, the Provisional Government had encouraged the church by issuing Decree No. 6403. In response to this decree, the Argentine Episcopacy in the Plenary Assembly of February 1956 considered the times favorable for establishing the Universidad Católica Argentina, and approved plans to organize it. UCA, or the Universidad Católica Argentina Santa María of Buenos Aires, was officially founded by the bishops in the Plenary Assembly of October 1957, having been preceded by the Cursos de Cultura Católica.¹ It was composed of three faculties--Philosophy, Law and Political Science, Social Science and Economics--and an Institute of Sciences and Letters and Arts.²

¹"Documentos: fundación de la Universidad Católica Argentina," Criterio, XXXI (March 27, 1958), 224, 226.

²"Comentarios: Universidad Católica Argentina," Criterio, XXXI (March 13, 1958), 174.

The Jesuits also decided to found a university built upon one faculty--the Faculty of Philosophy--which was the outgrowth of courses in higher education established at the Colegio del Salvador by Padre Enrique Pita, S.J., in 1943. Along with UCA, Salvador was considered an "institute" until it received official university status in December 1959,³ UCA having become a university earlier, in October 1959.⁴ Another "institute" founded by the Jesuits in 1956 in Córdoba was the forerunner of the Universidad Católica de Córdoba (1958).⁵

The Jesuit instituto-universidad founded in Córdoba illustrates the Catholic campaign to obtain the legalization of private universities. It was established as an institute by the Jesuits with the approval of the Archbishop of Córdoba. The aim of the Jesuits was to establish a university on a par with the national university located in

³ Interview with Daniel Obregón, S.J., first rector of the University of Salvador, Buenos Aires, July 17, 1972.

⁴ "Comentarios: perspectivas de la universidad," Criterio, XXXI (December 24, 1958), 946.

⁵ "Información: diócese a conocer el estatuto que regirá el Instituto Pro-Universidad Católica de Córdoba," Criterio, XXIX (July 26, 1956), 554.

Córdoba, and this was spelt out in the institute's statutes of 1956:

Fines: Las actividades del Instituto Universitario tenderán a dar una formación humanista, científica y profesional mediante la docencia y la investigación en sus formas superiores y el cultivo de las bellas artes. El Instituto Universitario es el germen de la futura Universidad Católica: sus fines por lo tanto no pueden ser sino los de la misma Universidad Católica, según consta en los estatutos de la misma.⁶

This institute-university enrolled 150 students in 1956, and by the end of the first academic year, the rector Padre Camargo, S.J., found himself addressing 268 students.⁷ In 1958, this institute-university became the first legal private university in Argentina after Congress approved a law which essentially recognized private universities. By the end of 1959, Camargo could brag that the University had grown from 150 to 400 students in just three years, from 30 to 100 professors, from a library of 1,000 books to 15,000 books, but that expenses had increased from 132,000 pesos to 1,200,000 pesos.⁸

⁶Ibid., p. 554.

⁷"Crónica: educación," Revista Eclesiástica Argentina, I (January-February, 1958), 96.

⁸"Universidades católicas," Revista Eclesiástica Argentina, II (January-February, 1959), 91; see also below, chapter 12, pp. 357-58.

Development of Catholic Campaign

The opposition to private universities had kept article 28 from being implemented by the Provisional Government, and it seemed to have been motivated more by distrust of the church than by a lack of confidence in private education as such. The Catholic press admitted it was difficult to distinguish between those against all freedom of education and those who merely opposed the Roman Catholic church.⁹ The church, therefore, was faced with a complex task of moulding public opinion. It could not simply brand its opponents as anti-clerics. Thus, the Catholic press pictured opponents of article 28 as totalitarians who opposed freedom of education.¹⁰ Article 28 symbolized private enterprise, freedom, democracy, and personal rights,¹¹ besides educational diversity¹² and decentralization.¹³

⁹E.J.B., "Crónica: comentario: la difícil libertad; apuntes para una crónica," Estudios, XLVII, no. 498 (October, 1958), 648.

¹⁰See above, chapter 8, p. 242.

¹¹Luis María Baliña, "Las universidades libres, aspiración secular argentina," Criterio, XXIX (February 23, 1956), 132.

¹²Franceschi, "Universidades libres," p. 125.

¹³"Comentarios: llamado a la coherencia," Criterio, XXIX (February 9, 1956), 97.

Since so many opponents of article 28 were connected with the national universities, the Catholic press attacked these universities as being of poor quality,¹⁴ their decadence being rooted in the state monopoly of higher education.¹⁵ Moreover, their students were portrayed as violent and lax about their studies. The opposition's argument that private universities were too new to grant habilitating titles was countered by pointing out that there were new national universities of the Sur and Nordeste.¹⁶

Catholic Rectors and Professors

In pursuit of this goal, the rectors of the university-institutes banded together in a Committee of Relations for Private Institutes-Universities of the Argentine Republic: it was made up of the Instituto Pro Universidad Católica de Córdoba and sister institutes of Santa Fé and La Plata, Universidad Libre de Santiago del Estero, Insti-

¹⁴"Educación y libertad," p. 685.

¹⁵See "Comentarios: límites del gobierno universitario," Criterio, XXIX (September 13, 1956), 658; "Comentarios: tumultos universitarios," Criterio, XXVIII (October 27, 1955), 775; and "Comentarios: revolución y democracia," Criterio, XXIX (January 12, 1956), 16.

¹⁶"Educación y libertad," p. 685.

tuto de Humanidades San Buenaventura de San Juan, Instituto Universitario de Mendoza, and the Instituto Libre de Humanidades de Santa Fé.¹⁷ This committee publicized the fact that private institutes-universities already existed, needing only the implementation of article 28 in order to realize their potential. On September 20, 1957, for example, this committee sent a note to Provisional President Aramburu, reminding him of Decree 6403.¹⁸

Professors at the Catholic institutes-universities also lobbied for article 28's implementation. On November 28, 1957, a delegation of professors from the institute of the Colegio del Salvador met with President Aramburu to "interest" him in implementing article 28.¹⁹ Catholic professors also spoke at public meetings in favor of enseñanza libre. At one such meeting in the Teatro Buenos Aires of the federal capital, they related freedom of education to private universities, and alleged that the failings of Argentina's educational system were due mainly to an anach-

¹⁷ "Documentos: artículo veintiocho," Estudios, XLVII, no. 490 (January-February, 1958), 51.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 51.

¹⁹ Ibid.

ronistic system of state monopoly.²⁰

Catholic Students

It was noted, in the last chapter, that the Humanists disagreed with the rest of FUA (Federación Universitaria Argentina) over its protests against article 28 and Dell'Oro Maini, the Minister of Education deposed in May 1956. At the National Convention of Students held in Buenos Aires on September 1, 1956, the Humanists continued to object to a state monopoly of education. However, they agreed with FUA on other issues such as improvements for the working class and the goal of creating a democratic and progressive Argentina; thus, they remained affiliated with

FUA.²¹ But when FUA went all out to convince Congress not to allow private universities in September 1958, the Humanists decided they could no longer remain within FUA, and they withdrew, beginning the first of many splits in the student movement since 1958.²²

²⁰"Comentarios: compromiso formal," Criterio, XXXI (June 26, 1958), 452.

²¹Walter, Student Politics in Argentina, pp. 166-68.

²²"Sepáranse de la FUBA las agrupaciones Humanistas," La Prensa, October 2, 1958, p. 6. The Humanists also objected to the increasing Communist line of FUA. (Walter, pp. 168, 176.)

Catholic secondary students already active in APAC were involved in the Catholic campaign for private universities. However, their numbers swelled when priests recruited primary and secondary students in Catholic schools to join in the demonstrations for private universities, thereby hoping to convince Congress to give them legal status. Right-wing priests also formed a well-known nationalist group, Tacuara, largely recruited from Catholic school students in the mid-50's. Among their purposes was to go out into the streets to fight the partisans of lay and state education.²³

Gathering of Outside Support

The Catholic campaign for article 28 was mounted by the hierarchy, priests, and the lay apostolate. But this would only be fully successful if Congress enacted legislation that legalized the professional titles of private university graduates. The church, therefore, turned its

²³After article 28 was incorporated into congressional legislation, the priests called upon Tacuara to disband, and it lost two-thirds of its members. Into it streamed lower middle class Peronist youth who gave it a leftward drift. Many of the surviving original members left and formed the Guardia Restauradora Nacionalista. (Rogelio García Lupo, La rebelión de los generales [Buenos Aires: Proceso Ediciones, 1962], pp. 72-74.)

attention to politicking for the support of political parties.

One party that could be counted on to promote private universities was the Christian Democrat Party, made up of men and women who considered themselves to be practicing Catholics applying the spiritual mission of the church to political life. During the 1958 election campaign, the presidential candidate of the Christian Democrats made clear their support of private universities:

Deseamos pues reorganizar la enseñanza en todos los órdenes, sobre la base de los principios de libertad, autonomía, descentralización, diversificación regional que deben ser las cuatro características que la orienten

Eso naturalmente supone romper con el monopolio estatal por una parte, y no solamente en el entido provincial o nacional, sino este monopolio nacional que tenemos, que no respeta las autonomías provinciales. En lo que se refiere al otro aspecto, señalaría que nosotros tenemos que tender a promover un régimen de competencia educativo, para que por vía de competencia se superen los planes y se mejoren los métodos. Por eso somos tan partidarios de un régimen de libertad, que va a permitir la competencia.²⁴

Similarly, the Independent Civic Party, organized by Alvaro Alsogaray at the beginning of 1956 to promote a "popular capitalism,"²⁵ put up a presidential candidate, Dr.

²⁴ "Los candidatos presidenciales nos hablan: el Dr. Lucas Ayarragaray expone los principios que sostiene el Partido Demócrata Cristiano," La Nación, January 11, 1958, p.3.

²⁵ Luna, Argentina de Perón a Lanusse, p. 103.

Juan B. Peña, who also supported private universities. He stated the position of his party on this subject in a La Nación interview published on February 1, 1958:

El Partido Cívico Independiente se ha expedido ampliamente sobre este tópicó: propicia la libertad de enseñanza en su más amplia acepción. Lo que involucra el derecho de personas y entidades, congregaciones religiosas, colectividades, asociaciones civiles, etc., a impartir toda clase de enseñanza, con los sistemas que encuentren mas adelantados y con la sola limitación de un mínimo que las leyes determinarán, los conceptos básicos de la democracia y los fundamentos de nuestra nacionalidad.²⁶

The above political party, made up of successful and conservative businessmen, had the same attitude toward the church and private universities as did the landowners and lawyers who dominated the Popular Conservative Party, another recent creation. In an interview with La Nación the Popular Conservative presidential candidate Dr. Vicente Solano Lima spoke in favor of not only private education but also its subsidizing by the state:

Soy contrario al monopolio estatal de la enseñanza y creo que debe formentarse la enseñanza privada; más aún, creo en el régimen de subsidios que debe establecerse para fomentar la educación privada.²⁷

²⁶Interview with La Nación, quoted in Domingorena, pp. 101-02.

²⁷Ibid., p. 102.

Thus the church could count on the Christian Democrats, the Independent Civic Party, and the Popular Conservative Party for support of "libertad de ensefianza."

But these parties were minor and would not have a majority vote in Congress even if they voted together. The political party of at least one-third of the Argentines, the Peronist, was forbidden to put up candidates. This left the Radical Party as the key party to any political decisions made by a representative government. The Radicals, however, had split into two factions by 1956--the UCRI or Unión Cívica Radical Intransigente, headed by Arturo Frondizi, and the UCRP or Unión Cívica Radical del Pueblo, headed by Ricardo Balbín. They had split primarily over whether they should woo the Peronists as Frondizi insisted, or have nothing at all to do with them, which was initially the point of view of Balbín;²⁸ UCRP, therefore, would not support the candidacy of Frondizi for president of Argentina.²⁹

²⁸Alexander, An Introduction to Argentina (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1969), p. 99.

²⁹Snow, Argentine Radicalism, p. 75.

In July 1957, the UCRP faction of the old Radical Party beat the Ucristas by a plurality of 260,000 votes in elections for delegates to the Constitutional Convention. If the UCRP commanded the same number and distribution of votes in the coming February 1958 elections, they would win the presidency and about 100 of the 187 seats in Congress. But the UCRP victory had been made possible because the Peronists had cast blank ballots.³⁰ Frondizi, who had been seeking Peronist support since 1956, stepped up his wooing of their party and leader in exile, Juan Perón, for he needed Peronist votes in order to win over the UCRP. He attained this support when a clandestine letter from Perón was circulated on the eve of the elections in February 1958, urging Peronists to vote for UCRI and its candidates.³¹

Frondizi also sought the support of Catholics and nationalists to assuage the armed forces who were nervous about his Peronist backing. His anti-divorce stand and support of article 28, a reversal of Radical principles which he had always endorsed, were taken to appeal to these

³⁰Ibid., pp. 76-82.

³¹Luna, Argentina de Perón a Lanusse, p. 116.

two groups. Article 28, it should be recalled, had been very vague about state supervision of private universities,³² and Frondizi had opposed this article in February 1956 as head of the Radical national committee's Oficina Universitaria. At that time the Oficina Universitaria had urged the Provisional Government to postpone the implementation of article 28 so that an elected government could "introducir reformas de fondo en la estructura educacional argentina."³³ But at the beginning of 1958, Frondizi was supporting the church's campaign for "libertad de enseñanza," a phrase that stood for article 28 or private universities' receiving state recognition--under ill-defined conditions--for professional titles.

The positions taken by Arturo Frondizi and his vice-presidential candidate Alejandro Gómez in effect constituted the program of the Ucrista Party since no platform had been drawn up in a national convention. In a talk on Radio El Mundo on January 14, 1958, Frondizi came out clearly as a proponent of private education:

El derecho constitucional de aprender y la libertad de enseñar serán celosamente preservados; y todo argentino tendrá asegurado el acceso a

³² See above, chapter 8, p. 236.

³³ This statement of the Oficina Universitaria was

la educación y el derecho a elegir el tipo de enseñanza que prefiera para sí o como padres para sus hijos. La salvaguardia de estos derechos es esencial, porque la imposición obligatoria de un espíritu determinado en la enseñanza constituye un avance peligroso en el ámbito de las conciencias.³⁴

The same theme was repeated in an interview with La Nación:

También he decidido antes de ahora mi posición sobre este asunto. Considero que el Estado debe prestar recursos para que la educación primaria, la secundaria y la universitaria dispongan de todos los elementos financieros indispensables para que el país tenga un alto nivel científico, un alto nivel técnico. Estamos absolutamente atrasados en relación a otros países. Creo que debe mantenerse el principio de libertad de enseñanza, es decir, que además de la actividad del Estado en todo lo que se vincula con el proceso educativo, los distintos sectores de la vida nacional pueden también ejercer el principio de la libertad de enseñanza.³⁵

Another way that Frondizi indicated his support of private universities besides mentioning "libertad de enseñanza," was to denounce the state monopoly of education:

introduced into the record by Deputy Carlos H. Perette, DSCD 1958, VI, p. 4360.

³⁴"Mensaje a 20 millones de argentinos," quoted in the Appendix, DSCD 1958, VI, p. 4454.

³⁵"Los candidatos presidenciales nos hablan: el Dr. Arturo Frondizi de la U.C.R. Intransigente, se refiere a diversos problemas del momento argentino," La Nación, January 16, 1958, pp. 3-4.

. . . creemos que en el otorgamiento de títulos se debe partir de la base de que la Nación no renuncia a su legítimo derecho de orientación, vigilancia y decisión sobre todo lo que tenga relación con los aspectos fundamentales de la enseñanza. No soy partidario del monopolio estatal.³⁶

Fronzizi was promising to keep tight control over private university titles while permitting them to be granted.

The historical tradition of the Radicals had been laicist and favorable to the national universities and their Reforma. The Left was already in Frondizi's camp because of his past progressive record.³⁷ At the end of January 1958, the head of the Communist Party, Rodolfo Ghioldi, threw his and his party's support to Frondizi.³⁸ A new Roman Catholic-oriented party of the extreme right,³⁹ the Unión Federal, also was asked to vote for Frondizi by its head, Mario Amadeo,⁴⁰ who was pleased with Frondizi's support of no-divorce and private universities, along with

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Luna, Argentina de Perón a Lanusse, pp. 116-17.

³⁸ Snow, p. 82.

³⁹ Alexander, An Introduction to Argentina, p. 104.

⁴⁰ Snow, p. 82.

other Catholics and nationalists. Frondizi's pre-election compromise with the hierarchy to favor private universities was an open secret in Argentina,⁴¹ and won him the support of the church and Catholics, a nice counter-balance to his Leftist and Peronist support.

Shortly after he was elected President of Argentina, Frondizi gave a speech from the Casa del Partido of Buenos Aires in which he once again pledged to provide libertad de enseñanza while in the same breath affirming that his government would not shirk lay and public education:

Será salvaguardado el derecho de los padres a elegir la clase de enseñanza que quieran para sus hijos; es decir, que no se impondrá ningún determinado tipo de enseñanza moral, sino la que el padre quiere. El Estado cumplirá su obligación dando todo el apoyo necesario a las instituciones oficiales invirtiendo grandes recursos en sus programas de educación y cultura popular.⁴²

How Frondizi would deal with education was still anyone's guess after the election, and this ambiguity remained after another interview with La Nación. When asked

⁴¹An editorial in Criterio, the magazine that reflects the hierarchy's point of view, claimed that there was no secret agreement but an open pre-election commitment. ("Educación y libertad," p. 687.)

⁴²Speech of February 21, 1958, cited by López Serrot, DSCD 1958, VI, p. 4398.

if he would maintain Ley 1420 or bring about "enseñanza libre," he answered that "La Ley 1420 establece la enseñanza libre." The reporter went on to ask: "¿Pero con títulos habilitantes otorgados por el Estado?" Frondizi responded,

No señor; porque hay muchos casos en que el Poder Ejecutivo autorizó el otorgamiento de títulos. Yrigoyen autorizó a expedir títulos dentro del régimen de la ley 1420. Tal el caso de Entre Ríos. En estos temas, conviene que haya precisión para que no nos equivoquemos. En cuanto a las ideas de gobierno, mientras no las modifique--cosa que no pienso hacer--son las que he fijado oportunamente.⁴³

Frondizi was reminding the reporter of the time when President Yrigoyen and his Minister of Education decreed that private secondary schools could award "certificados de enseñanza" to students with an annual average of seven points without their having to pass a final state examination. This decision had been favorable to the church, and caused the church to petition the state, unsuccessfully, to extend this privilege to institutes of higher education, namely to Catholic universities.⁴⁴ By mentioning this legal

⁴³ "Relaciones con la iglesia y enseñanza," La Nación, February 28, 1958, quoted in "Crónica política," Revista Eclesiástica Argentina, I (March-April, 1958), 93.

⁴⁴ Ghioldi, Libertad de enseñanza, pp. 97-98, 128-34.

change which had benefited the church, was Frondizi giving a warning of his intentions?

While many may view Frondizi's adherence to the episcopacy's university cause as purely for political reasons, i.e., in order to convince Catholic and nationalist elements in the armed forces to allow him to take office even if Perón, whom they hated and feared, had supported him, it may also be seen as a product of new political configurations in post-Perón Argentina. The liberals who had consistently opposed Perón had been helped in the final hour by the church. Some of these liberals began to view the church as playing a positive role, that of maintaining social discipline and control in face of such threats as fascism, Peronism, or communism. Thus the aspirations of the episcopacy found an audience at least within an important minority of the liberal camp--notably including Frondizi and some of his fellow Ucristas. Some liberals also assumed that Argentine education should be entrusted to the church and public education more vigorously supervised in order to exclude the above ideological heresies.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Halperín Donghi, Historia de la Universidad de Buenos Aires, pp. 200-01, 204.

CHAPTER TEN

PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES LEGALIZED

As already noted, it was not at all clear what Frondizi as president would do about private universities, especially since his Party was divided over the issue, and it was not really imperative that Frondizi keep any election promise to the church once he took office. An American political scientist perplexedly noted, "After his inauguration Frondizi acted in a manner almost diametrically opposed to his former writings and speeches."¹ Yet on March 13, 1958, president-elect Frondizi announced that he was studying the legal means by which the principle of "libertad de enseñanza" could be put into effect.² By these words Frondizi showed his determination to complete the break with the "izquierda laica." The Marxist historian Jorge Abelardo Ramos cynically observed that "ante la proximidad del poder la burguesía expresa en sus jefes sus tendencias ideológicas más conservadoras."³ The National Committee of UCRP accused

¹ Snow, Argentine Radicalism, p. 84.

² E.J.B., "Crónica," p. 645.

³ Jorge Abelardo Ramos, Revolución y contrarrevolución en la Argentina (2 vols., Buenos Aires: Plus Ultra, 1964-65), II, 678.

Fronidizi of backing private universities in order to win Catholic support for unpopular solutions in other areas.⁴

Others have subsequently suggested that Frondizi wanted to create a smokescreen to divert the public's attention from a series of controversies surrounding the early stages of his administration.

A kinder analysis of Frondizi's favoring of church-related universities is that he wished to modify the doctrinaire stances that kept Argentina fragmented and at the same time served as obstacles to the course of rapid modernization that Frondizi, as a committed desarrollista, was seeking to promote. He displayed a similar pragmatism in the area of petroleum policy, where he retained the state's ownership of Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales (YPF) yet also arrived at contracts with foreign oil companies to develop Argentine oil reserves. By his ley de amnistía and related moves, he set out to reincorporate the Peronists into Argentine political life. And by his acceptance of private universities, he both held out conciliation to Catholics and struck a blow for greater flexibility in the

⁴This accusation is contained in a resolution read into the record by Deputy Ruben Víctor M. Blanco, DSCD 1958, VI, pp. 4207-08.

regime of higher education⁵--a flexibility that was in principle all to the good, whether or not the private universities that resulted have provided just the kind and amount of innovation that Argentina needed.

Whatever the reasons, the fact is that Frondizi's support of private universities represented a shift from positions formerly taken by him and other members of the UCRI as exponents of longstanding Radical traditions and attitudes. There was an implicit elitism in the case for private universities that contrasted with the equalitarian dogmas, though not necessarily the real attitudes, of traditional Radicalism. More important, or at least more immediately controversial, was the abandonment of the laic tradition of Radicalism. This change clearly reflected a new attitude toward the church, one that considered the church an ally for the development of Argentine society along the lines desired by Frondizi and many members of his Party.⁶

⁵Luna, Argentina de Perón a Lanusse, pp. 122-25.

⁶See above, chapter 9, p. 269.

Preliminaries of Debate

Special Committee Report

A few days before the Provisional Government was to recede in favor of Frondizi, the incoming president, the Special Committee appointed by Minister of Education Dell'Oro Maini in February 1956 issued its report on the prospects of implementing article 28. This report of April 18, 1958, was signed by committee members Drs. Bernardo A. Houssay, Eduardo Braun Menéndez, Sebastián Soler, Venancio Deulofeu, Juan T. Lewis, Luis F. Leloir, Jaime Perriauz, Eduardo Huergo, and Alfredo Carlos Casares, who concluded that article 28 was "inconvenient." The Committee faulted the text of the article for employing the wrong term "libre" for private universities; for according the right to found educational institutes when the Constitution had already accorded it; for giving the institutes the faculty to grant diplomas and habilitating titles directly; and for not foreseeing the need that these institutes subsist from state funds. The Committee then averred that Congress and not the Executive should draw up a university law.⁷

⁷Deputy Misael J. Parodi Grimaux, DSCD 1958, VI, p. 4156; and Ghioldi, Libertad de enseñanza, pp. 155-56.

The Committee then went on to lay down some basic principles that would guide any future university law, presumably reflecting the Catholics' revised assessment of what they could attain, since this Committee had been stacked by Dell'Oro Maini with men who were favorable toward the church and its positions. Private institutes, the Committee proposed, could become universities that were self-supporting; they could not exercise the state function of granting habilitating titles. But,

Los certificados parciales de estudios o los diplomas podrán ser acreditados para autorizar a su tenedor a rendir el examen de estado de habilitación profesional, siempre que los estudios cursados en la institución otorgante de aquéllos, reúnen las condiciones establecidas por la ley.⁸

This proposition was illustrative of a change in Catholic demands, from clamoring for private universities which could grant diplomas and habilitating titles to the demand for an "examen de estado," which implicitly all university students (national and private) would take before committees appointed by the state.⁹ Throughout the ensuing debate, however, there was much room for imprecision in dis-

⁸Ghioldi, Libertad de enseñanza, pp. 156-58.

⁹Ibid., p. 158.

cussing the question of professional certification. While private university advocates normally accepted that only the state should grant such certification, they were often unclear--perhaps deliberately--as to whether they expected the state to issue habilitating titles only after holding special examinations or simply to rubberstamp the titles issued by approved private universities.

National University Protest

The national university community--faculty, administration, and students--went into an uproar over the increasing likelihood of a law that recognized private universities. They realized along with everyone else that the church was the only interest group capable of establishing private universities and the only major interest group which wanted them as of 1958. The confessional nature of such private universities was deplored as a break with traditional Argentine cultural diversity exemplified by the national universities. The recent experience under Perón had taught the partisans of the national universities the importance of ideological pluralism, and the private universities, it was argued, would be possible centers of fascism and totalitarianism. The national universities needed time and money to recover from Peronism and to

"reconstruct" themselves; Catholic universities would compete for already scarce state resources, such as money, to the detriment of the national universities.¹⁰

The leader of the national university community protest was the rector of the University of Buenos Aires, Risieri Frondizi. When his brother, the president-elect Arturo Frondizi, persisted in going ahead with plans to implement article 28, he and the other university rectors hastened to issue a declaration of their own:

No debe confundirse a la opinión pública mezclando grandes principios con intereses mezquinos, circunstanciales o sectarios. La gran mayoría de los universitarios argentinos, somos decididos partidarios de la libertad de enseñar y aprender y estamos dispuestos a luchar por ella.

Una cosa sin embargo es la libertad de enseñar y otra muy distinta el afán y la urgencia por conseguir a toda costa la patente para otorgar títulos habilitantes.

Llama la atención el contraste entre la premura por conferir ese derecho a instituciones que no tienen un año de vida y la parsimonia por asegurar una estabilidad jurídica a las Universidades Nacionales que han tenido la responsabilidad de la enseñanza superior y la formación de profesionales desde la iniciación misma de la Nación.

La Ley Avellaneda que rigió la vida de las Uni-

¹⁰Halperín Donghi, Historia de la Universidad de Buenos Aires, pp. 201-05.

versidades Argentinas desde 1885 hasta 1947 y que esta nuevamente en vigencia según lo dispone el Decreto-Ley 447 establece en el artículo 1º 'la Universidad expedira los diplomas de las respectivas profesiones científicas.' ¿Puede alguien pensar que esta vieja y sabia ley contraría el principio constitucional establecido en el Artículo 14?¹¹

The national university rectors also submitted their own university reform bill to Congress in June 1958. By it, the national universities would enjoy full autonomy in drawing up their own statutes, determining their own system of government, electing their own authorities, and appointing and removing personnel for research, technical, administrative, and teaching functions without intervention of the Chief Executive. Only the national universities could grant habilitating titles.¹² On August 21, the rectors met with President Frondizi and presented him with a petition that asked him not to implant article 28 of Decree 6403.¹³

Six days later Frondizi gave his answer in a press

¹¹E.J.B., "Crónica," pp. 645-46.

¹²Consult Terrén de Ferro, "Educación: la universidad actual y su autonomía," p. 464.

¹³Domingorena, pp. 59-60.

release containing nine points in favor of article 28.

The last point reaffirmed his promotion of private universities:

El Poder Ejecutivo hace saber al país que está estudiando los medios jurídicos para hacer efectivo el principio de la libertad de enseñanza dentro de los conceptos arriba enunciados.¹⁴

National university students also protested against article 28 and private universities in late August, when the Federacion Universitaria Argentina organized parades in front of the National Congress building. They carried placards whose slogans backed up the petition of their rectors: "State, Yes; Private, No," "Secular, Yes; Free, No," and "Priests, No; Books, Yes."¹⁵ On September 1, Frondizi made a formal reply to the rectors' petition; he fully supported "libertad de enseñanza."¹⁶

When it appeared likely that Congress would approve legislation authorizing private universities that could grant habilitating titles to students who passed a state

¹⁴E. J. B., "Crónica," p. 645.

¹⁵Walter, Student Politics in Argentina, pp. 163-64.

¹⁶Domingorena, pp. 62-63.

examination,¹⁷ the rector and students of the University of Buenos Aires became more politically active. On September 4, Risieri Frondizi addressed the Federación Universitaria de Buenos Aires (FUBA) and then led the students in a march on Congress, where he requested that article 28 be defeated. The throng chanted, "The school is Sarmiento's," and "Priests to the monastery."¹⁸ On September 9, Risieri Frondizi spoke to the Federation of Engineering Students, inspiring them to fight for the national universities because:

Durante ocho meses, hemos mantenido la Universidad de Buenos Aires al margen de toda cuestión política; . . . Fuerzas oscuras se movían sigilosamente, mientras nosotros trabajábamos tranquila y serenamente. Estábamos desprevenidos, pero no necesitamos mucho tiempo para reaccionar . . . y ahora salimos a luchar.¹⁹

He continued his speech by pointing out how the private institutes-universities were of poor quality, had few students, and had copied the worst aspect of the national universities--"el profesionalismo." He wondered why the ur-

¹⁷The students were to receive the title only after passing the state examination.

¹⁸E.J.B., "Crónica," pp. 648-49.

¹⁹Risieri Frondizi, "La enseñanza libre y la libertad de la cultura," in La reforma universitaria 1918-1958, ed. Federación Universitaria Argentina (Buenos Aires: Federación Universitaria de Buenos Aires, 1959), pp. 257-58.

gency on their part for article 28, and then answered his own question: the private universities "prefieren lanzarse inmediatamente al mercado de la venta de títulos." He finished this talk by calling upon Congress to quash article 28 and sanction a university law that permitted national universities to work in peace and for the good of the country, and he beseeched the Chief Executive to quit playing politics with education and stop tampering with the cultural conquests of the Argentine people.²⁰

In September, the FUA, in imitation of the national university rectors, also submitted a bill to Congress that contained their thoughts on a new national university law. No private universities were allowed since all were national. The universities were communities of professors, students, and alumni, all of whom had equal duties and rights. The universities were autonomous, running their own affairs. This student bill called for the cancellation of all previous university laws, including Ley Avellaneda, and decrees, including Decree 6403.²¹

²⁰Ibid., pp. 262-65.

²¹FUA, "Anteproyecto de ley universitaria," La reforma universitaria 1918-1958, pp. 266-70.

High school students, mainly from the public secondary schools, joined university students in their protests against private universities. In July 1958, two hundred delegates from thirty colegios met in Buenos Aires to coordinate their demonstrations with the university students "Ante la primera noticia de la reglamentación del artículo 28 que ponía en peligro nuestra Universidad Nacional....."²²

This organization of secondary students was known as FES (Federación de Estudiantes Secundarios), of which the most active branch was FEMES (Federación Metropolitana de Estudiantes Secundarios) of greater Buenos Aires.²³

Students--mainly university--held demonstrations against article 28 in Córdoba and La Plata during the first half of September.²⁴ On September 19, an estimated 160,000 persons, mainly male university students, converged on the

²²Jorge M. Rensin, "¿Puede el gobierno ignorar la agremiación secundaria?" La reforma universitaria 1918-1958, p. 276.

²³Ibid., pp. 275-77.

²⁴The Córdoba students opposed to private universities had thrown tar bombs, and the Córdoba governor had had to call out troops to replace the police in maintaining order in the University of Córdoba. In La Plata a dummy of President Frondizi dressed as a cardinal had been ceremoniously burned. ("Aniversarios: setiembre 1958: laicos v. libres," Primera Plana, VI /September 24, 1968/, 84.)

Plaza del Congreso. Speakers called for the defense of "the popular culture," and for enseñanza laica.²⁵ After the demonstration FUA resolved to "occupy" and "take" the national universities if article 28 were not abrogated.²⁶

Demonstrations became increasingly violent: the Plaza del Congreso was the scene of daily pitched battles between the Reformistas of FUA and the police. Secondary students of FES joined the university students in boycotting classes.

Catholic Counter Protests

The hierarchy was prepared to accept that the state should set standards for admittance into the professions. But the church did not want the national universities to decide who could practice a profession, feeling that the national universities would discriminate against graduates of Catholic universities. In a speech published during September 1958, Cardinal Caggiano stated that:

. . . un control del Estado, que permita la libertad para que las universidades privadas, como las

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ The speakers represented alumni, university students, secondary students, political parties, and labor groups, and urged the rejection of article 28. (La Prensa, September 20, 1958, p. 1, as quoted in Walter, p. 165.)

estatales, den títulos académicos, pero que no impliquen de inmediato el ejercicio de las profesiones se vincula con el bien público, por lo cual el Estado es el que debe regular el ejercicio de las mismas. El Estado debe determinar la forma de tomar el examen de competencia profesional, hasta establecer cualquier otro medio de control. No es necesario inventar ninguno, porque en las naciones de América y de Europa funcionan los mas diversos procedimientos por los cuales el Estado controla el acceso al ejercicio de las profesiones.²⁷

The Permanent Commission of the Argentine Episcopacy reiterated on September 15 that enseñanza libre was not enseñanza religiosa, and that the church was asking for nothing for itself but rather the freedom to learn for all with legitimate state supervision.²⁸ The bishops' university, the Universidad Católica in Buenos Aires, also declared what it wanted in a university law. Point no. 5 asked that only the state recognize professional degrees or titles,²⁹ since it was important to the bishops that the national universities were not delegated the authority to

²⁷Democracia, September 10, 1958, quoted in a speech by Deputy Oscar López Serrot, DSCD 1958, VI, p. 4400.

²⁸"Educación y libertad," p. 687.

²⁹"Documentos: declaración de principios de la Universidad Católica de Buenos Aires y de Córdoba," Estudios, XLVII, no. 497 (September, 1958), 571-72.

represent the state in recognizing the titles and degrees of Catholic universities because they could be expected to oppose them.³⁰ Point no. 8 of the same declaration illustrated another facet of the church's position by arguing that the money spent on education came from the whole populace and should be proportionately spent on both state and private universities as well as on primary and secondary schools.³¹ However, the demand for public funding, which on the whole had been kept discreetly in the background, was strongly rejected by the opponents of private universities, and such a provision was not included in the final version of the law for private universities.

The September 4 street demonstrations led by Risieri Frondizi were denounced by the Humanists, who began to plan counter demonstrations.³² Catholics in the University of Buenos Aires Assembly criticized Frondizi's actions and unsuccessfully tried to get a vote of censure against him.³³

³⁰See below, p. 295.

³¹"Documentos: declaración de principios," p. 571.

³²La Prensa, September 13, 1958, p. 5, quoted in Walter, p. 16.

³³E.J.B., "Crónica," p. 649.

Catholic professors and rectors of the private institutes-universities drew up a university bill to counter that of the national university rectors and that of FUA. They wanted an organism of the state to recognize habilitating titles of the new private universities, and they no longer spoke of state funding of the private universities.

Artículo 5^o--Las Universidades Privadas podrán establecer sus propios planes de enseñanza, otorgar certificados de estudios y expedir diplomas que sólo tendrán valor académico.

Artículo 6^o--Los titulares de diplomas académicos, expedidos por las Universidades Privadas, tendrán el derecho a presentarse al Ministerio de Educación para obtener el reconocimiento de su validez profesional, el cual será otorgado por intermedio del organismo a que alude el Artículo 7^o, previa comprobación de que las Universidades Privadas que los expedieron cumplan todos los requisitos exigidos por la presente ley y reglamentación.

Article 4 did not mention state aid for the private universities, but neither did it exclude the possibility: it only stated that the universities could "fijar aranceles y recibir contribuciones....." ³⁴

Catholics also mounted a massive street demonstration on the 15th of September to counter the ones of opposing

³⁴"Documentos: anteproyecto de ley para las universidades privadas: fundamentos, articulado y reglamentación de la ley," Estudios, XLVII, no. 498 (October, 1958), 655.

students held in Córdoba and La Plata. Composed mainly of Catholic elementary, secondary, and university students, plus adult men and women, the crowd numbered from 100,000 to 150,000 persons, stretching for ten blocks along the Avenida de Mayo. They converged on the Plaza del Congreso where Congress was considering article 28, and as they passed the Casa Rodada they shouted, "Risieri-Nikita, qué linda parejita," and "Arturo, coraje, a Risieri dale el raje"; President Frondizi came out on the balcony and saluted them.³⁵

Catholics also decried the demonstrations organized by FUA, and tried to play down the far greater numbers they attracted. Criterio charged that the September 19 protest drew so many persons because some government officials had been accomplices and let employees out early to join the protest, and because some public transports had not charged the demonstrators fare to the Plaza del Congreso.³⁶

Congress

The Bill

Article 28 had stated that private initiative could

³⁵E.J.B., "Crónica," p. 649.

³⁶Ibid., p. 650.

create private universities which could officially issue diplomas and professional titles, though under some sort of state regulation. This proposition was rejected by too many congressmen and senators to be made law. The promoters of private universities realized that only a law which reserved to the state the right to emit habilitating titles and forbade state funding of private universities would be considered. And even with these two disclaimers included, the outcome was not certain.

Subsequently, both the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate voted to abrogate article 28 of Decree 6403.³⁷ The Senate, under the leadership of Senator Horacio Domingorena of the Ucrista Party, approved a new article which formed part of what became known as the Domingorena bill. The revised bill authorized private universities to grant titles and/or academic diplomas. Graduates of these universities who wished to practice certain professions would have to submit to state examinations given by a state body created for such a purpose. Public funds ("recursos estatales") could not be given to these universities, and private universities were to submit their statutes and plans of study

³⁷ Ghioldi, Libertad de enseñanza, pp. 160-61.

to a state administrative authority for prior approval.³⁸

In the Senate this version was passed by the majority Ucristas, who voted along party lines, and was returned to the Chamber of Deputies for their approval.

Heated Debate in Chamber

This bill passed to the Chamber of Deputies where many Ucristas bolted from their Party to oppose it; in fact, the UCRI Party released its members from voting according to the party line so that they could vote according to their conscience. On September 23, sixty-three Ucrista deputies signed a manifesto that stated:

1) Negamos expresamente que en los actuales momentos esté en juego el principio de la libertad de enseñanza o de la enseñanza libre, como quiera llamarsela, que todos defendemos.

2) Pero entendemos, en ejercicio del derecho de policía del Estado, que los títulos habilitantes para el ejercicio de las diversa profesiones científicas sólo pueden ser otorgados por las universidades estatales.³⁹

The sixty-three Ucristas who signed the above manifesto joined with UCRP and the Socialists in voting down the Domingorena bill.

³⁸This revision was taken up by the Chamber. (DSCD 1958, VII, p. 5343.)

³⁹DSCD 1958, VI, p. 4359.

The UCRP had already published its reasons for rejecting the Domingorena bill on September 18. It accepted the right of all inhabitants of the country to found private institutions, but stated that "el Estado no puede ni debe compartir con los particulares, ni con instituciones privadas, ni delegar en ellos su obligación de ejercer el poder de policía sobre el otorgamiento de títulos habilitantes para el ejercicio de las profesiones." Moreover, like the Ucrista dissidents, it affirmed that only the national universities could represent the state in the above functions. It concluded that "las universidades privadas no pueden encontrar inconvenientes en la adopción de los planes de estudio, regímenes de promoción y de otorgamiento de títulos habilitantes para el ejercicio de las profesiones, prescritos por las leyes y reglamentos de la materia ya que están sometidas las propias universidades nacionales."⁴⁰

UCRP, in effect, took the stand that the national universities should be supreme and the private ones subjected to their standards--with the national universities administering those standards to them.

The deputies continued to oppose the revised bill

⁴⁰DSCD 1958, VI, p. 4208.

for reasons that were not fully stated and which were affected by anti-clericalism. They sympathized with the administration and faculty of the national universities who wanted to maintain their monopoly of university education. Proponents of private universities tried to reassure the national universities and their congressional allies that they need not fear competition since they had federal backing and strong organization. It was also expected that private universities would attract liberal arts students and would permit the national university to invest state resources into preparing the costlier programs for the training of technicians. The private sector on the primary and secondary levels saved the state money for public education, and so would the private university.⁴¹ But the deputies continued to fear that once Catholic universities got a foot in the door they would press for the privileges of granting habilitating titles and receiving state funds, thereby competing with the national university for already scarce funds, good faculty, and students. The private university would also be more likely to acquiesce in state interventions than the united national universities who

⁴¹Domingorena, Artículo 28, pp. 133-40.

fought dictatorships in the past. Proponents of national universities assumed that examinations for habilitating titles would be given by political appointees and simply nominal. Moreover, a future President or Congress could change the law or implement it in a way even more favorable to the private universities, taking away from the monopoly of higher education of the national universities.⁴²

But the Senate stuck to its revision of article 28 which stated that the state could award habilitating titles, a compromise between the position of those who wanted the private universities to award habilitating titles and the position of the national universities which was that only they could award such titles. Thus the bill again returned to the Chamber on September 30; it was necessary for the deputies to defeat it by a two-thirds majority in order to block its passage, since it had twice been approved by the Senate.⁴³ In the end, sixty-nine deputies voted against killing the bill, and though its opponents mustered

⁴²Based on interview with Risieri Frondizi, Buenos Aires, August 12, 1972; and interview with Américo Ghioldi, Buenos Aires, August 15, 1972.

⁴³Article 68 of Chapter V of the Constitution provides that if a bill is approved by a two-thirds majority for a second time by the originating house, the other house must defeat it by a two-thirds majority vote.

102 votes, they fell short of the necessary two-thirds.⁴⁴

The final bill was promulgated as Ley 14.557; its text read as follows:

Artículo 1^o: Derógase el artículo 28 del Decreto-Ley 6.403/55 y apruebase en su reemplazo el siguiente:

La iniciativa privada podrá crear Universidades con capacidad para expedir títulos y/o diplomas académicos.

La habilitación para el ejercicio profesional, será otorgada por el Estado Nacional.

Los exámenes que habiliten para el ejercicio de las profesiones serán públicos y estarán a cargo de los organismos que designe el Estado Nacional.

Dichas Universidades no podran recibir recursos estatales y deberan someter sus estatutos, programas y planes de estudio a la aprobación previa de la autoridad administrativa, la que reglamentará las demás condiciones para su funcionamiento.

El Poder Ejecutivo no otorgará autorización, o la retirará si la hubiese concedido, a las Universidades Privadas, cuya orientación y planes de estudio no aseguren una capacitación técnica, científica y cultural de los graduados, por lo menos equivalente a la que imparten las Universidades Estatales y/o que no propicien la formación democrática de los estudiantes dentro de los principios que informan a la Constitución Nacional.⁴⁵

⁴⁴DSCD 1958, VII, p. 5344.

⁴⁵Domingorena, pp. 85-86.

Repercussions

More Riots

The passage of the Domingorena bill on September 30 resulted in opposing students trying to storm Congress and set the building on fire. A student protest on October 1 was held in the Plaza del Congreso, and traffic was blocked with park benches. Four hundred students marched on the Casa Rosada, but were turned back by the police.⁴⁶ On the same day the Catholic Humanists withdrew from FUBA (Federación Universitaria de Buenos Aires) because they did not share FUA's opposition to private universities and article 28. This withdrawal was followed by student boycotts of classes and a riot between the Humanists and Reformists at the University of Buenos Aires, leading police to intervene and the Reformists to erect barricades against the police.⁴⁷ In Tucumán, a gun battle was waged with the police, causing Minister of Education Luis MacKay to intervene with a call to students to calm themselves down and an order clos-

⁴⁶"Hubo desórdenes estudiantiles en Plaza del Congreso," La Prensa, October 2, 1958, p. 6.

⁴⁷See "Sepáranse de la FUBA las agrupaciones Humanistas," La Prensa, October 2, 1958, p. 6; and "Intervinieron en nuevos y más graves sucesos los estudiantes," La Prensa, October 4, 1958, p. 4.

ing secondary schools where there were disturbances.⁴⁸

Since most police action was directed against the Reformists of FUA when they clashed with the Humanists, there were protests lodged against the police by the Socialist Party, the Centro de Estudiantes de Ciencias Económicas, and the Federación Metropolitana de Estudiantes Secundarios.⁴⁹

The police, on the other hand, blamed the disorders of September 30 on "la extrema izquierda" who, they claimed, were trying to make a civil issue into a religious one.⁵⁰

Question of Implementation

Before the new law for private universities went into effect, the President of Argentina would have to implement it. On October 4 the rector (R. Frondizi) and deans of the University of Buenos Aires met with the Minister of the Interior and asked that the government not implement it, so that the whole matter could be taken up by Congress in 1959 and peace could come to the campuses again.⁵¹

⁴⁸"Comentarios: desórden en la enseñanza," Criterio, XXXI (October 9, 1958), 735.

⁴⁹"Repercusión pública por el conflicto estudiantil," La Prensa, October 4, 1958, p. 6.

⁵⁰See "Comentarios: religión y anticlericalismo," Criterio, XXXI (October 9, 1958), 733-34; and "Comentarios: peripecias de la libertad," Criterio, XXXI (September 25, 1958), 698.

⁵¹Domingorena, p. 87.

Leaders of all national universities also met with President Frondizi and asked him to veto the law; they sent him a note on October 16, reminding him that passions were still stirred up, and that the moment was "inopportune" for private universities.⁵² The note also contained a threat of more demonstrations if Frondizi implemented the law:

Los ocho Rectores Universitarios nos apresuramos a hacer llegar al señor Presidente, nuestra inquietud y preocupación ante esa noticia y creímos nuestro deber advertirle las posibles perturbaciones a la vida universitaria que tal reglamentación ocasionaría.⁵³

The Catholics, too, put pressure on President Frondizi, but in their case it was for the implementation of the law in a form that would be advantageous to them. They wanted a Consejo Nacional de Universidades Privadas to be created which would, among other duties, issue habilitating titles for the exercise of professions when academic titles were submitted by the private universities; nothing was said about state examinations being given to their grad-

⁵²Speech of Jorge Camargo, Rector of the Universidad Católica de Córdoba, Córdoba, October 18, 1958, quoted in "Comentarios: algo que no puede ser 'sorpresivo,'" Estudios, XLVII, no. 499 (November, 1958), 721.

⁵³Domingorena, p. 88.

uates for these titles. Neither was the possibility ruled out that these universities might receive public funds.⁵⁴

Similarly, Catholics harped on the inequities between private and public universities that were written into the law. The law called for state examinations to be given to the graduates of private universities for habilitating titles: their suggested remedy was for these examinations to be cancelled once private universities demonstrated that they had high standards, or for these examinations to be given to the graduates of the state universities, too. Second, it was unjust that private universities could not receive state moneys, since federal taxes were paid by all. And third, the phrasing of the law was patronizing when it said that private universities must have a curriculum that assures a technical, scientific, and cultural level on a par with that of the national universities.⁵⁵ Above all, Catholics wanted the law for private universities to be implemented as soon as possible so that the existence of these universities would not be jeopardized. They pointed out that these private institutes-universities already ex-

⁵⁴ "Documentos: anteproyecto," p. 656.

⁵⁵ Ismael Quiles, "Reglamentación de la ley de universidades privadas," Estudios, XLVII, no. 499 (November, 1958), 695.

isted, so why not implement the law!⁵⁶

Implementation

President Frondizi promulgated Ley 14.557 in mid-October 1958,⁵⁷ and implemented it by Decree no. 1404 on February 11, 1959. By issuing the decree in February, a summer month in Argentina, the government avoided student demonstrations against the decree since the students were on vacation. The state body created to supervise the private universities was the Inspección General de Enseñanza Universitaria Privada, located in the Ministry of Education and Justice. Private universities that complied with Ley 14.557 could grant titles and academic diplomas. The Executive Power would designate "tribunales de profesionales y profesores de la especialidad de que se trata" to examine those graduates who were to receive habilitating titles. The decree was rather vague, however, about the number of examiners, the length of the examination, what professions would be examined, how often the examinations would be given, and what type of questions would be asked--in short, the examinations would depend upon the persons appointed by

⁵⁶Jorge A. Camargo, "La ley y la realidad universitaria actual," Estudios, XLVIII, no. 501 (January-February, 1959), 40.

⁵⁷ALA 1958, XVIII-A, p. 213.

the Chief Executive from professional associations, high schools, state and private university faculties.⁵⁸

Clearly the above decree needed to be clarified by another, but it was not until January 22, 1962, that Minister of Education Luis MacKay and President Frondizi issued a supplementary decree on the subject of habilitating examinations. Decree no. 631 of the above date established that habilitating examinations would be given for the careers of law, architecture, economics, pharmacy, biochemistry, engineering, medicine, notary public, agronomy, and veterinary science. The examinations would be given by three examiners representing the state, the private university, and the professional association of that career. The tribunals of examiners would be appointed by the Ministry of Education and Justice, and they would take their questions from the curriculum of that major field as established by the private university.⁵⁹

The 1962 decree was still too vague to satisfy the rector of the University of Buenos Aires, since it contained no binding provisions as to the type or length of the exam-

⁵⁸ALA 1959, XIX-A, Part 2, pp. 73-74.

⁵⁹ALA 1962, XXII-A, pp. 222-24.

ination.⁶⁰ He also complained that the examining board was reduced to only three examiners, and that there was no provision for the professional fields of odontology, chemical engineering, meteorology, geology, and secondary school teaching.⁶¹

Frondizi thus kept his promise to the Catholics made before the election--he backed a bill in Congress that recognized the diplomas of private universities, and he implemented it when it became law. But in the process he alienated those liberals who were anti-clerical or who felt a close identification with the national universities, both in and out of his UCRI Party. Because of his support of the private university law, the leftist and liberal intellectual circles would never trust him again.⁶²

⁶⁰"Acerca del examen para la habilitación de profesionales," La Prensa, February 5, 1962, p. 6.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Luna, Argentina de Perón a Lanusse, pp. 129-30.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

RELIGION IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS SINCE 1958

Political Background

Fronidizi-Guido

Fronidizi's administration had more to do with education than just the private university question already dealt with; it also had certain policies to promote in primary-secondary education, and gave strong financial support to education in general. His policies were viewed as pro-Catholic, illiberal, and anti-laic by those in the laicist camp, and public education lost ground vis-à-vis the private sector.¹ Yet from 1961 to 1962 the budget for education increased 22.6%. The proportion of the budget set aside for education in 1960 was 12.3%; in 1961, it was 13%; and, in 1962, it was 17.6%.²

¹"En 1958 llegó Fronidizi al poder, con una rama de los radicales, y su acción, no obstante tener fama anterior de liberal, fue netamente antiliberal, antilaica y procatólica. Fronidizi hizo un daño tremendo al liberalismo y al laicismo, pues entregó la enseñanza pública al arbitrio de los católicos." (Information in a letter to the author from José S. Campobassi, Buenos Aires, December 27, 1974.)

²"El presupuesto de educación para el año 1963," La Prensa, November 16, 1963, p. 6.

General elections for national congressmen and provincial legislators and governors were slated for March 1962, and, for the first time since the overthrow of Perón, Peronist candidates were allowed on the ballot, albeit under non-Peronist headings. These neo-Peronists captured 31.9% of the vote³ and triumphed in four provinces--five if Jujuy is counted, where they helped a Christian Democrat to win.⁴ The Ucristas won 24.5% of the vote, the UCRP 19.9%, the Popular Conservatives 6%, the Socialists 4.5%, and the Christian Democrats 2.3%.⁵ The anti-Peronist armed forces decried the Peronist victories and demanded that Frondizi intervene provinces where they had won. Even though he complied, the military overthrew him on March 28. On March 30, they decided to let the constitutional successor to the presidency, Ucrista head of the Senate José María Guido, become President if he would annul the elections and intervene all provinces. Guido also closed down Congress so that no Peronist could take his seat there.⁶

³Snow, Argentine Radicalism, p. 94.

⁴Luna, Argentina de Perón a Lanusse, p. 139.

⁵Snow, p. 113.

⁶Luna, pp. 147-48.

Guido continued the policies of Frondizi in the educational field until he was succeeded by Arturo Illia as President of Argentina in July 1963. Guido's government proportioned the same amounts of money to education, and favored the growth of the private sector. According to a La Prensa editorial the 32,000 million pesos spent annually on public education was still inadequate. For example, out of a possible graduating population of 400,000 in 1961, only 18% or 70,000 students graduated from high schools, and only 13,211 of them graduated with a degree of bachillerato.⁷

Illia

The election of Illia brought the UCRP Party to power. He received 25% of the vote, nearly one million more than UCRI. However, the law of elections drawn up by the Ucrista Guido established the d'Hondt system of proportional representation, under which UCRP won only 71 of the 192 seats in Congress; without a clear majority, Illia and his Party would need to strike bargains with the other parties. Illia did nothing to halt the erosion of laicism in Argentine education,⁸ but followed the trends of the Ucristas to spend

⁷"Educación pública insuficiente," La Prensa, August 31, 1963, p. 6.

⁸Letter from Campobassi to author, Buenos Aires, December 27, 1974.

more on education. In 1960, 2% of the Gross National Product of Argentina went to education; in 1965, 3.3% did; in 1967, one year after the military coup against Illia, the percent of the GNP spent on education had reverted to 2%.⁹

Throughout the period from 1963 to 1966, the predominant attitude of the Argentine political elite toward the church was favorable, to judge from survey results. Thus the members of Illia's UCRP, a political party whose public positions were less favorable to the church than those of UCRI (Frondizi), showed itself well disposed to the church. Interviews with 68 members of the Illia administration disclosed that 42.6% thought that the Catholic church should play an important role in the political life of Argentina, while 16.1% said that this should only be in an emergency, and 38.2% stated that the church should never play an important role in the political life of Argentina. The attitudes of the future members of the political elite--university students--were at that point also found to be favorably disposed toward the church: 45% stated that the Catholic church should always play an important role in

⁹UNESCO, "Public Expenditure on Education," UN Statistical Yearbook, 1971 (Louvain, Belgium: Imprimerie Ceuterick, 1972), p. 515.

the polity.¹⁰

Onganía

When the UCRP administration of Illia was tossed out by military action in June 1966, the military dictator who took over was Juan Carlos Onganía, an Army general and a staunch Catholic. Under him there were no elections, and military governments ruled in the provinces by decree. Education budgets for public schools were decreased, and reforms were planned to weaken the public education system by transferring national primary schools to the provinces.¹¹ The university law was changed to allow private universities to receive state aid. Military governments which succeeded Onganía's after 1970 continued his educational policies, and by 1972, there were five provinces which had religious education in the provincial public schools during school hours, given by priests or other persons authorized by the provin-

¹⁰A study of the political elite (398 activists in the 1958-62 Frondizi administration, and 384 activists of the 1963-66 Illia administration), which was defined to include Congressmen, governors, upper-level administrators, and government heads, consisted of two different surveys and only questioned the Illia elite on their attitudes toward the Roman Catholic church. (Julio A. Fernández, The Political Elite in Argentina [New York: New York University Press, 1970], pp. 62, 86, 94-95.)

¹¹See below, pp. 328-33.

cial hierarchy. These five provinces--Buenos Aires, Córdoba, Santa Fé, Catamarca, and Salta¹²--had enrollments of more than half of the total Argentine school population.

Religion and Public Schools Since 1958

1958 Estatuto del Docente

The Provisional Government's 1956 interim Estatuto del Docente was replaced by a new statute approved by Congress on September 12, 1958; it was published as Law 14.473.¹³ It lumped together public school personnel with that of private schools "adscriptos a la enseñanza oficial"; either they were primary, financed by the CNE, or they were secondary, normal, or special, "incorporados a la enseñanza oficial."¹⁴ The teachers and administrators of these private schools would enjoy the same monthly salary as their peers in public schools (municipal, provincial, and national). This federal remuneration also contained an escalator clause that tied salaries to the cost of living. Retirement pay

¹²Interview with Hermano Septimio, head of CONSUDEC, Buenos Aires, September 16, 1972.

¹³ALA 1958, XVIII-A, pp. 98-127.

¹⁴Article 174, ibid., p. 126, uses the definition of this category of private schools found in paragraph a) of article 2 of Law 13.047, ALA 1947, VII, pp. 392-93. Also see above, chapter 5, p. 127.

was subsidized by the federal government for private as well as public schoolteachers and administrators; if they had worked for 25 or 30 years, depending on whether they taught or not, they were assured of a pension of at least 82% of the salary of an active teacher or administrator; early retirement was compensated at 75% of the last salary earned. This statute also introduced a new policy: for every ten years worked, a teacher or administrator could take a year off with pay in order to study.¹⁵

This law was mainly the work of the Ucristas who dominated the Senate, since it was their version passed by a two-thirds majority the second time around. The Chamber of Deputies had passed by a two-thirds majority a very similar bill that differed in the following ways: it wanted to protect the tenure of personnel in private schools; and, to pay the full salary of personnel in private schools only if they were tuition free, otherwise salaries would only be subsidized up to 80% of the full amount as in the 1947 Statute.¹⁶ The Frondizi government further implement-

¹⁵See the "Consideraciones," ALA 1958, XVIII-A, p. 99.

¹⁶Proposed articles 174, 176, ibid., pp. 101-02; and "Dióse sanción definitiva al Estatuto del Docente," La Prensa, September 13, 1958; pp. 1, 4.

. . . la enseñanza adscripta subvencionada configura una tercera parte de la que se desarrolla en el país, con sujeción a programas y directivas oficiales, y . . . la suma requerida a la Nación para pagar los sueldos equiparados significa solamente una décima parte de la que debiera votarse para hacer frente a los aumentos de los docentes oficiales . . . la enseñanza adscripta subvencionada ahorra al Estado por impartirse en lugares apartados de la República--sumas superiores a los 2,000 millones de pesos anuales.¹⁹

As in 1947 and 1956, there was little opposition to the including of private school personnel and teachers in the Estatuto del Docente. Public schoolteachers and personnel seem to have concentrated on obtaining higher wages for themselves along with their comrades in the private schools.²⁰ The main problem for public school personnel was to get the government to adjust their pay scale to the cost of living which was rapidly increasing. Beginning in 1957 teachers had called upon the Provisional Government to implement the Estatuto del Docente of 1956 in order to receive adequate state remunerations and retirement pay,²¹

¹⁹"Aporte del estado a la docencia privada," La Prensa, August 3, 1958, p. 7.

²⁰"Nuevas gestiones para mejorar los sueldos de docentes," La Prensa, June 30, 1958, p. 22.

²¹"Reglamentación del Estatuto del Docente," La Prensa, November 18, 1957, p. 6; "En una asamblea pública pidióse ayer la vigencia plena del Estatuto del Docente," La Prensa,

which were not yet fixed but were to be studied by a commission.²² This "inter-ministerial" commission recommended reforms and salary schedules which were included in the 1958 Statute. But the government was slow to adjust wages to the rising cost of living as provided in the escalator clause (article 134) of the Statute, and teachers had to threaten or call strikes during every administration thereafter in order to receive just wages.²³ The Illia government established a scale for subsidies of 40%, 60%, and 80% to private schools, depending on how much tuition the schools charged; tuition-free schools received a state subsidy of 100%. Private schools that received tuition had to set aside at least half of these funds for staff salaries. Class size was set at a certain minimum.²⁴ This sliding-

November 24, 1957, p. 8; "Reflexiones sobre el curso escolar," La Prensa, December 7, 1957, p. 6; and "Reglamentación en parte el Estatuto del Docente," La Prensa, December 31, 1957, p. 1.

²²Article 2, Ley 16.767, September 11, 1956, ALA 1956, XVI-A, p. 988.

²³"De los docentes se ocupa el Congreso," La Prensa, August 3, 1960, pp. 1, 4; "El descuento en los haberes de los docentes," La Prensa, February 14, 1962, pp. 1, 22; and "Comenzarán hoy otra huelga los docentes," La Prensa, August 19, 1963, pp. 1, 3.

²⁴D. 15, January 2, 1964, ALA 1964, XXIV-A, pp. 200-05.

scale system was in line with the Deputies' opposition to full subsidization when the law was originally adopted.

Fronidizi also implemented the 1958 Statute by founding

²⁵
SNEP.

Enseñanza Religiosa in Public Schools

With the advent of the Frondizi government the church had an ally which would help the private sector in the field of education. The church renewed its push for religious education in the public schools, or as Campobassi put it, "its offensive against lay education."²⁶ Ucristas, Christian Democrats, Popular Conservatives, and Peronists²⁷ aid-

²⁵SNEP replaced the Dirección General de Enseñanza Privada only to be replaced itself by a Consejo de Enseñanza Privada in early 1962. The Illia administration again reverted to SNEP, and the Onganía government retained this acronym but renamed its private education agency the Superintendencia Nacional de Enseñanza Privada and transferred to it the Inspección Técnica General de Escuelas Particulares of the Consejo Nacional de Educación. (D. 895, January 25, 1962, ALA 1962, XXII-A, pp. 227-28; and D. 5923, September 25, 1968, ALA 1968, XXVIII-C, p. 3624.) See above, p. 307.

²⁶Campobassi, Ataque y defensa del laicismo escolar en la Argentina, p. 97.

²⁷Peronist co-operation with the church did not go unnoticed or unrewarded. The Vatican lifted Perón's excommunication of February 13, 1963, eight years after his excommunication. Notice of Perón's absolution was kept secret until September 7, 1971, because of "el delicado momento político por el que atravesaba entonces la Argentina." (Gambini, El peronismo y la iglesia, pp. 107-12.)

ed the church on the national and provincial levels. This effort continued during the Illia administration, and remained unabated during the dictatorship of Orgańa. Since the provinces theoretically had autonomy in drawing up their own educational systems, Ley 1420 did not apply to the provincial schools, and, therefore, the church had more chance for success at this level.

Provincial Level

Buenos Aires.--In the province of Buenos Aires, enseńanza religiosa had been implanted by the Fresco government in 1936 and had remained part of the primary school curriculum until a Peronist-controlled legislature removed it in 1955. In 1958, the Ucristas captured control of the provincial government as well as the national government. The new Minister of Education of the Province of Buenos Aires announced that he was preparing a bill for a "texto único y oficial" while the provincial legislature was considering a similar bill.²⁸ This old saw smacked of censorship as well as Catholicism as it had in the time of Perón. As in the time of Perón, there was enough opposition to defeat

²⁸" Libro escolar único y oficial?" La Prensa, July 28, 1958, p. 8.

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it.

The Minister of Education of the province also sought to rewrite the curricula for classes of morality in 1958, according to the teachings of the Roman Catholic church. This plan was at first opposed successfully by the teachers' unions, Federación Universitaria Argentina (FUA), UCRP, Socialists, and certain other lobbying groups.³⁰ Undaunted, the Minister tried to obtain approval for a religious education program in all schools from a congress of educators representing both public and private schools; again he was unsuccessful.³¹ So, he tried again, this time convoking a meeting of three teachers' unions--the Asociación de Maestros de la Provincia de Buenos Aires, the Asociación de Maestros "Domingo Faustino Sarmiento," and the Corporación de Maestros--to get their approval of religious education in the provincial schools; it was resoundingly voted down. But then, on July 6, 1961, the Minister of Ed-

²⁹ See above, chapter 5, pp. 131-32.

³⁰ Consult the magazine published by the Federación Universitaria Argentina, Revista del Mar Dulce, IV, suplemento 4 (September, 1958), pp. 1-43; and Campobassi, p. 129, et passim.

³¹ Campobassi, p. 124.

ucation arbitrarily replaced the existing morality curriculum with one that was catechistic. This amounted to the implantation of enseñanza religiosa into the provincial schools of Buenos Aires. A Socialist attempt to beat back this curriculum was defeated in the provincial legislature.³² In 1967, a decree of the federal interventor reaffirmed "educación moral" as part of the curriculum of the provincial primary schools.³³

Corrientes.--In August 1960, an assembly was held to reform the province's constitution during which the Christian Democrats tried to add a clause favoring religious education. But a majority consisting of Liberals, Intransigent Radicals, and Autonomists instead supported the Committee on Education's recommendation which said merely that primary education will be compulsory and free and will develop all the human faculties needed to form the Argentine man by the "fomento del amor a la patria, y a la unión espiritual del pueblo en el culto a la libertad y la democracia como sistema de vida." Of the four who voted in favor of religious education, three were members of the Christian Democratic

³² Ibid., p. 125.

³³ Article 111 of D. 9813, September 25, 1967, ALA 1967, XXVII-C, p. 3368.

Party and one was a Ucrista.³⁴

Santa Cruz.--In November 1961, the Chamber of Deputies ratified a law on religious education which made it legal for the province's elementary schools to offer an elective course in religious education during school hours. The parties favoring religious education were the UCRI, Conservador Popular, Demócrata Cristiano, and Movimiento de Recuperación Radical; in opposition were the members of the UCRP. The law allowed religious education to be given as an elective twice a week during the last hour of classes. The authorities of the religions chosen by the parents of the pupils would choose the teachers and texts for the classes. This education bill also provided financial aid to private schools in the form of scholarships and subsidies to the families who otherwise would not have the economic means to send their children to private schools.³⁵

Chubut.--The Ucristas controlling the province's legislature sanctioned a law in 1958 which established free,

³⁴Campobassi, pp. 132-33; and "Las deliberaciones de la convención de Corrientes," La Prensa, August 7, 1960, p. 6.

³⁵Campobassi, pp. 140-41; and "La ley de educación fue aprobada en Santa Cruz," La Prensa, November 13, 1961, p. 10.

obligatory, and lay education.³⁶

San Luis.--A constitutional reform convention which met in April 1962 debated whether religious education should be after school hours in the manner of Ley 1420. This was affirmed by a vote of 29 to 20 when Liberal Democrats were joined by some Ucristas to defeat a Ucrista proposal that religious education be given during school hours.³⁷

Santa Fé.--In early 1962, a convention was held to reform the Constitution of Santa Fé. The archbishop and bishops of the province sent a note to the convention's president advocating retention of article 15 of the existing constitution which stated that the religion of the province was "católica, apostólica y romana"; and the retention of articles 70 and 77 which required that the governor and vice-governor of the province be of the Roman Catholic faith. The laic school was denounced as contrary to freedom of choice and to the conscience of believers, and the bishops called upon the convention to recognize the right of parents to choose the type of education they wanted for

³⁶Campobassi, p. 140.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 136-37.

their children.³⁸

The dominant party in the convention was the UCRI. Delegates from the Federación Provincial del Magistrado met with Ucrista representatives to lobby for educational reforms. While they agreed with the church's position that parents should have a choice of the kind of education they wanted for their children, they also lobbied for lay education in the public schools. They wanted private schools to be controlled by provincial authorities, and they wanted 30% of the provincial budget to be spent on education.³⁹

The UCRI Party joined the Christian Democrats in voting to maintain the wording of the previous constitution which offered the province's protection to the Roman Catholic religion while guaranteeing freedom of religion. The articles on education did not establish religious education in the public schools, but guaranteed the right of choice of school to parents, and promised to stimulate the founding of private schools.⁴⁰ The political parties that

³⁸"La reforma en Santa Fe de la Constitución: en una nota expone la iglesia su pensamiento al respecto," La Prensa, February 16, 1962, p. 6.

³⁹"Sobre la reforma constitucional en materia educativa," La Prensa, February 18, 1962, p. 4.

⁴⁰"La convención trata en Santa Fe los despachos," La Prensa, April 11, 1962, p. 6; and "Se sancionó la nueva

voted against making the Catholic religion the official one and defended the lay school were the Progressive Democrats, UCRP, and Trabajo y el Progreso: they lost on the first point but won on the second.⁴¹ The Catholics were dissatisfied, and in 1963 the Asociación del Magisterio Católico asked the federal interventor to implant religious education in the provincial schools; he refused.⁴²

Córdoba.--In Córdoba religious education during school hours (one-half hour each week) was sanctioned by a 1937 law, but the rules regulating it held that schoolteachers could not teach it, making it almost ineffective. On March 10, 1959, the Archbishop of Córdoba, accompanied by two of his bishops, asked the governor of Córdoba to annul the article prohibiting the teachers as state agents to teach the Roman Catholic religion in the province's elementary schools. The governor promised the prelates that the matter would be studied and referred the problem to Córdoba's Consejo General de Educación, the provincial counterpart to

Constitución de Santa Fe," La Prensa, April 15, 1962, p. 6.

⁴¹"La reforma de la Constitución de Santa Fe se trata en particular," La Prensa, April 13, 1962, p. 8; and "Aprobóse en general el proyecto de la Constitución de Santa Fe," La Prensa, April 12, 1962, p. 12.

⁴²Campobassi, p. 132.

the national CNE.⁴³ It refused to change the law on the ground that the teacher would then be put in a partisan position. The Córdoba episcopacy appealed the decision and pressured the governor to remedy the situation. The Catholic newspaper Los Principios supported the episcopacy's case, but not so its colleague La Voz del Interior and the Asociación de Maestros de la Provincia de Córdoba, who wanted to preserve the status quo. The 1937 law which allowed for religious education in the primary provincial schools was maintained⁴⁴ as it was. In August 1963, a federal interventor inserted in the secondary schools compulsory classes in religion or morality for a minimum of two hours a week during school hours.⁴⁵

Tucumán.--The Ucrista governor of Tucumán drew up a bill for the reimplantation of religious education in the province's primary schools. This proposal was applauded by the Liga Humanista and the Organización pro Defensa de la Libertad de Enseñanza in October 1960. Groups that

⁴³"Crónica: educación," Revista Eclesiástica Argentina, II (May-June, 1959), p. 316.

⁴⁴Campobassi, pp. 134-36.

⁴⁵The curriculum and clerical or lay teachers for religion had to be "aceptados por la autoridad eclesiástica," (D. ley 846, August 5, 1963, ALA 1963, XXIII-B, p. 1228.)

opposed the teaching of religion and morality in public schools during school hours were the usual type of pressure groups. The provincial Senate passed the measure; in the Chamber of Deputies the Ucrista and Blanco (Peronist) Parties supported it, although four Ucristas joined the UCRP and two minor party deputies in voting against it, but again it passed. The governor of Tucumán implemented the law by adopting the curriculum for religious education in schools approved by the Plenary Assembly of the Argentine Episcopacy in 1957.⁴⁶

In 1967 the above 1960 law was modified, and the dispositions dealing with religious education in the provincial schools were reedited. The new article read as follows:

La formación espiritual del educando se procurará mediante la enseñanza de la religión por la que optaren los padres. En caso de negativa o de falta de opción se enseñará moral. En uno u otro caso las clases se darán durante los horarios que correspondan y como parte integrante de los respectivos planes de estudios.⁴⁷

The Onganía military government's interventor thereby kept religious education in Tucumán's schools.

⁴⁶Campobassi, pp. 137-39.

⁴⁷Article 14, Ley 3472, ALA 1967, XXVII-B, p. 2629.

La Pampa.--On June 10, 1960, the Ucrista majority approved religious education in the provincial primary schools, though outside regular class hours, by adopting article 20 of a new provincial Constitution which stated:

La instrucción primaria será obligatoria, gratuita, gradual, integral y regional. Podrá impartirse enseñanza religiosa en las escuelas públicas a los alumnos que opten por ella, exclusivamente por los ministros autorizados de los diferentes cultos, y con posterioridad a las horas de clases oficiales.⁴⁸

UCRP had opposed this provision, arguing that the Constitution should remain laic and not bring up the subject of religion.⁴⁹

Salta, Catamarca, and Jujuy.--Federal interventors implanted religious education in the provincial schools of three more provinces in 1962 under the Ucrista administrations of Frondizi and Guido.⁵⁰ In Salta the interventor issued a decree-law which said that religion would be given

⁴⁸Campobassi, p. 141.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰General elections were held from December 1961, to March 1962, and provinces were intervened before March 1962, by Frondizi, succumbing to military pressure; subsequently Guido intervened all provinces. (Luna, Argentina de Perón a Lanusse, p. 139; and Snow, Argentine Radicalism, pp. 92-96.)

during regular class hours to students in the provincial schools; if the parents objected, a student would study morality. The curriculum for religion would be officially approved by the Argentine episcopacy.⁵¹ The re-implantation of religious education in the provincial schools in Salta received a te deum of thanks offered in the cathedral by the Archbishop of Salta; the Bishop of Orán and other Catholic spokesmen sent notes and telegrams to the federal interventor, thanking him for the measure.⁵²

In June 1962, the primary schools of Catamarca had religious education made part of their curriculum by the province's federal interventor. The orientation of this education was to be administered by a priest and a corps of inspectors chosen by the ecclesiastical authorities.⁵³ The number of schools affected by this decree was large since the national primary schools had already been transferred to provincial jurisdiction by the CNE on March 14, 1962.⁵⁴

⁵¹D. Ley 18, January 26, 1962, ALA 1962, XXII-B, p.1736.

⁵²"Refiérse el arzobispo a la reimplantación de la enseñanza religiosa," La Prensa, February 2, 1962, p. 7.

⁵³Campobassi, p. 139.

⁵⁴See below, p. 328.

In October 1962, the federal interventor of Jujuy reimplemented religious education in the provincial primary schools by decree. Article 2 of the decree modified article 15 of the education law of the province to read:

La enseñanza religiosa será dada en las escuelas por personal designado a propuesta de las autoridades eclesiásticas del culto Católico Apostólico Romano de la provincia, sin remuneración por parte del Estado.

Esta enseñanza se impartirá dentro de los horarios normales, a los niños cuyos padres, tutores o encargados, no manifiesten su voluntad en contrario y no constituirá materia de promoción.⁵⁵

National Level

Less progress was made by advocates of religious education at the national level despite the favorable disposition of the Ministry of Education due to the political alliance forged by the Ucristas with the church. After the UCRI had won the battle for private universities, its leaders turned their energies toward advancing church teachings in the public schools, but some members often balked, remaining faithful to the laicism inculcated by their Radical Party heritage.

Between 1959 and 1960 the Ministry of Education orga-

⁵⁵D. Ley 5, October 31, 1962, ALA 1962, XXII-B, p. 1539.

nized seminars for all Argentine primary and secondary teachers in order to discuss educational reforms. Local seminars chose delegates to regional seminars who, in turn, chose delegates to the First National Seminar on Education, held in Córdoba during March 1960. In attendance were the Minister of Education and Justice, Dr. Luis R. MacKay, his sub-secretary, Antonio Salonia, the Minister of Public Education of Córdoba, Dr. Edgar Vidal, national legislators, provincial legislators, and representatives of civic institutions.⁵⁶

According to Campobassi, these seminars had been stacked in favor of the religious schools. Primary schoolteachers and university professors were excluded or withdrew from participating; both groups were strongly lay. Instead, the seminars wound up being assemblies of secondary schoolteachers, a level with more private schools and teachers than any other. And because each school was allotted an equal number of delegates, the more populous public schools were put on a par with the smaller private schools.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ "Un seminario de educación se inició en Embalse," La Prensa, March 5, 1960, p. 4.

⁵⁷ The Liga del Profesorado Secundario declared in November 1959 that the national seminars would be dominated

Not unexpectedly, a majority of the 174 delegates at the national seminar resolved that the Roman Catholic religious should be taught in all schools to all grades, with an alternative course in ethics for children whose parents wanted them exempted from religion.⁵⁸ Since the majority of delegates were priests and nuns or lay teachers in the religious schools,⁵⁹ it appears that the church still hoped to obtain the reimplantation of religious education in the public schools.

But these seminars came to naught because the proponents of lay education were too strong in the educational bureaucracy and teachers' unions. Protests by UCRP deputies, teachers' and students' groups focused on the defense of Ley 1420:

. . . el pedido de implantación de la enseñanza religiosa hecho por los referidos seminarios, no es otra cosa que la culminación de un ataque a la ley 1420, garantía de acceso a los establecimientos educacionales de las clases populares y freno

by those who wished to deprecate public education. This opinion was also shared by numerous other teacher groups. (Campobassi, pp. 110-11.)

⁵⁸Campobassi, pp. 110-13.

⁵⁹"Continuarán hoy en Córdoba los seminarios de educación," La Prensa, March 9, 1960, p. 17.

de todos los intentos de dogmatizer la
enseñanza.⁶⁰

In order to co-ordinate the educational curriculum of the national and provincial primary schools, the Frondizi government had begun annual assemblies of educators from both levels. In July 1960, the Third Assembly of the Permanent National Commission on Academic Coordination met in Tucumán with provisional and national authorities present. The delegates represented their provinces and were to select curricula for the national and provincial primary schools. The delegation from the CNE proposed that the curriculum for morality include the idea of God as the Creator and the duties owed to Him. Laicists feared that the introduction of God into the curriculum would be used as a pretext to slip in Roman Catholic indoctrination not actually provided for in the bare words of the CNE curriculum reform, and it was voted down by eleven votes to seven.⁶¹

The reaction of the church to this vote was public and furious. The Archbishop of Tucumán condemned the de-

⁶⁰This is a quotation from a student group at the University of the Litoral. ("Repudia la Federación Universitaria del Litoral los seminarios," La Prensa, March 13, 1960, p. 6.) For protests of the UCRP, etc., see Campobassi, pp. 109-10.

⁶¹Campobassi, p. 118.

cision. Catholic Action of Santiago del Estero condemned that province's delegates for not supporting the CNE proposal. Similarly, the Archbishop of Córdoba protested to the federal interventor of Córdoba against the negative vote of the delegate representing Córdoba.⁶² The interventor's reply seemingly took the side of the delegates, but actually pointed out to the church that it was free to influence local governments in order to change education laws:

La resolución de Tucumán, al dejar librada a los gobiernos locales la decisión sobre tan delicado asunto, no sólo no se opone al cumplimiento de la Constitución y de las leyes de esta provincia, y por ende a la enseñanza de la religión en las escuelas, sino que, muy por el contrario, respeta y ratifica el derecho de los gobiernos locales a seguir los lineamientos que le marca su propia organización constitucional.⁶³

This reply could not hide the fact that an attempt by national authorities in the CNE to implant religious ideas in the curriculum had not only been made, but had also failed, as had similar efforts made in the national seminars discussed above. Undaunted, the Minister of Education MacKay and his appointed following in the CNE took

⁶²Ibid., pp. 119-20.

⁶³Ibid., p. 121.

another option open to them--the CNE instituted curriculum changes without approval by any representative body.

Hardly had the Commission which met at Tucuman voted down the CNE's proposals, than the CNE announced its revisions of the curriculum for primary schools. It was to include a notion of God and the duties owed Him,⁶⁴ the very program defeated in Tucumán! Laic groups denounced this curriculum change to no avail. The Liga Argentina de Cultura Laica saw it as "una tentativa para incorporar la enseñanza religiosa en las escuelas."⁶⁵ The Confederación de Maestros concurred that the introduction of the idea of God was equivalent to implanting religious education in the schools, something that Law 1420 had aptly restricted.⁶⁶ According to the Círculo de Profesores de Educación Democrática and other lay groups, this curriculum reform arbitrarily made by the CNE (a body dependent on the Minister of Education) was a victory for the Catholic church in that it represented the imposition of ". . . la enseñanza de una religión determinada, en manifiesta violación de la Consti-

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 122.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Ibid., pp. 122-23.

tución nacional y de la sabia ley federal 1420, que establece que la enseñanza debe ser laica, gratuita y obligatoria."⁶⁷

Transfer of National Schools to Provinces

Fronidizi and Minister of Education MacKay also drew up plans to turn the primary schools created by Ley Láinez over to the provinces. To this end, pacts were signed with the provinces of Santa Fé, Buenos Aires, Catamarca, Santiago del Estero, San Luis, Neuquén, and Formosa, beginning in early 1961. Decrees by the CNE and the educational authorities of the provinces ratifying these pacts ("convenios") soon followed.⁶⁸ A general decree outlining the intent of the national government was announced on January 17, 1962; article 1 declared:

Desde el comienzo del curso lectivo del año 1962 todos los establecimientos de educación primaria dependientes del Consejo Nacional de Educación ubicados en jurisdicción provincial cuya transferencia no se haya concretado hasta entonces pasarán a las respectivas provincias donde se encuentren.⁶⁹

Since the provinces could not afford to run them plans were

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 123.

⁶⁸ALA 1962, XXII-A, pp. 167-69, 173-77, 276-77, 298, 326-28.

⁶⁹D. 495, January 17, 1962, ibid., pp. 205-06.

made to have the national government pass on to the provinces the necessary moneys to maintain them, construct new schools, and pay the salaries of their personnel:

Art. 8^o--El Poder Ejecutivo nacional transferirá a las respectivas provincias una suma anual igual a la que tiene asignada en el presupuesto vigente para el sostenimiento de los servicios incluidos en el presente decreto.⁷⁰

As these schools ceased to be national, they would come under the control of the provinces and subject to provincial laws. Therefore, provincial courses of religious education would be injected into their curriculum if the provincial laws so allowed. The transfer of national primary schools would clearly benefit the church and proponents of enseñanza religiosa.

Besides fearing that clerical interests benefited from the transference of schools to the provinces, teachers' unions and bureaucrats also feared that the provinces would not be able to financially maintain the schools as well as the national government. The decree of the Frondizi administration establishing the transference of schools foresaw the resistance of teachers and threatened resisters with dismissal:

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 206.

Art. 5^o--El personal que no acepte el cambio de jurisdicción sera dado de baja⁷¹

But bureaucratic intransigence and a strong defense of Law 1420 and the national primary schools by teachers' unions delayed the implementation of this decree in spite of the threats made.⁷²

Curiously, the federal interventor of San Luis denounced the "convenio sobre transferencia de escuelas nacionales a la provincia," which had been approved by the provincial legislature after the convention had been drawn up by the CNE in agreement with the Consejo of San Luis in December 1961. In the "consideraciones" of this decree, provincial authorities claimed that the national decree was ill-founded, undemocratic, and costly to the province. This denunciation anticipated the repeal of Decree 495:

Que la transferencia sobre escuelas nacionales situadas en provincias, ha sido realizada sin debate previo, ni estudio alguno, por cuyo motivo los intereses de lo nacional primero, como así los de los maestros y personal y los de las mismas provincias, luego, tal el caso de las de San Luis no han sido tenidos en cuenta, todo lo cual configura un procedimiento que no condice con la

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Interview with Emilio Mignone, Subsecretary of Education 1966-70, Buenos Aires, March 10, 1972.

manera de vida republicana y democrática propugnada por nuestra Constitución Nacional; Que la transferencia tal como se efectuó el procedimiento, no se pudo considerar en profundidad el tremendo problema económico y vino a crear a nuestra provincia erogaciones, que no está de ninguna manera en condiciones de afrontar y además de mantenerse, acarrearía a la provincia, la quiebra económica, pues de ninguna manera podrá sostenerla, ya que su presupuesto deberá aumentarse en casi un 40% con todas las consecuencias previsibles. . . . 73

Finally the government of Guido responded to the denunciations of Decree 495, and annulled it with Decree 7814, declaring that schools would not be transferred to the provinces if the provincial legislatures had not ratified the "convenios"; however, since those of Santa Cruz, Neuquén, and San Luis⁷⁴ had ratified agreements already made, the national primary schools would be considered transferred to these three provinces.⁷⁵

The transfer of national schools to the provinces was revived again during the Onganía administration. Law 17.878 of September 5, 1968, authorized the Executive Power

⁷³D. Ley 18, July 26, 1962, ALA 1962, XXII-B, p. 1862.

⁷⁴This is in spite of the fact that the interventor of San Luis had denounced the "convenio" of December 28, 1961. (Ibid.)

⁷⁵D. 7814, ALA 1962, XXII-A, pp. 608-09.

to transfer national schools in the provinces and territories to their jurisdiction. The law was almost a replica of the decree of 1962. Article 7 stipulated that:

Queda facultado el Poder Ejecutivo para transferir a las provincias con las que se suscriban convenios, los fondos necesarios para atender las erogaciones de los establecimientos y servicios que se transfieren. El monto de dichos fondos no podrá superar el asignado en el Presupuesto Nacional para tal fin y los mismos continuarán figurando en el anexo pertinente de la Secretaría de Estado de Cultura y Educación, pudiendo ser incrementados en razón de los aumentos automáticos o que disponga la Nación por ajuste de índice docente. La contribución financiera podrá comprender también los fondos necesarios para terminar obras en ejecución y su habilitación y los valores totales resultantes tendrán el carácter de contribución especial.⁷⁶

Again "convenios" were signed with various provinces for the transfer of national schools to them: Río Negro, La Rioja, and Buenos Aires. These pacts were then ratified by the national government in early 1969.⁷⁷ These transfers were again impeded by protests of educators and bureaucrats⁷⁸ who saw them as weakening Law 1420, the national school system, and laicism. They saw these transfers as

⁷⁶ALA 1968, XXVIII-C, p. 3291.

⁷⁷ALA 1969, XXIX-C, pp. 4131-32.

⁷⁸Interview with Emilio Mignone, Buenos Aires, March 10, 1972.

hurting the schools because the provinces would be responsible in the long run for their administration and funding. This weakening of the public schools would abet the private schools, including those of the church, because they would face less competition.

On February 6, 1970, the Onganía government published a decree that encompassed Law 17.878 and other laws that transferred national "organismos y funciones" to the provinces.⁷⁹ This new law amounted to an authorization to carry out these transfers, but it was never put into practice.

Religious Objects in Classroom

Religion often penetrated the public provincial and national schools in the form of religious objects--crucifixes, saints, pictures of clerics--that were placed in the halls and classrooms. From time to time, a principal or teachers would challenge the placing of religious objects in the public schools. In cases involving the national schools, the CNE was the final arbiter; the CNE's decisions reflected those of the Minister of Education and Justice

⁷⁹Ley 18.568, February 6, 1970, ALA 1970, XXX-A, pp. 148-50.

who in turn reflected the attitude of the administration then presiding over Argentina.

Before the advent of the Frondizi government, a principal had removed classroom crucifixes from a school in the province of Corrientes. The Inspección de Escuelas of that province refused to have the objects replaced, and the church futilely protested this decision. In another incident, a crucifix was removed from the auditorium of the Colegio Nacional of Buenos Aires before it was to be used for graduation ceremonies. The principal refused to receive a group of Roman Catholics protesting this action.⁸⁰

With the Ucristas in power after May 1958, religious objects in the classroom became an issue. During this period the CNE tended to back up the church and allow religious objects to be in the national schools' classrooms. At the beginning of 1959 the Bishop of Posadas sent a note to the clergy of his jurisdiction warning them of an attempt on the part of "enemies of the faith" to take crucifixes and images of the Virgin or saints from school establishments. He reminded them that a CNE resolution was in force permitting the image of the Virgin of Luján in public

⁸⁰ "Crónica: educación," Revista Eclesiástica Argentina, I (January-February, 1958), 95-96.

schools.⁸¹ In another case, religious objects were removed from a school in Tucumán, resulting in Catholic protests that received the backing of the province's Inspección de Escuelas. The CNE intervened and forced the principal to replace the sacred images.⁸²

In September 1960, crucifixes were removed from the Faculty of Law at the National University of La Plata and from the office of the Justice of Peace of Morón. The Argentine government intervened to have the crucifixes replaced and those responsible for their removal were fired. A declaration of the Executive clarified the Frondizi government's policy:

La presencia de símbolos religiosos como el crucifijo en locales públicos de enseñanza, de administración de justicia, de gobierno, . . . puede entenderse como signo de . . . la más elevada garantía de respeto . . . E/1 Gobierno Nacional señala aquí su posición, que considera lógica e históricamente acertada, y su decisión de mantenerla y hacerla mantener en cuanto de él dependa.⁸³

⁸¹ "Crónica: educación," Revista Eclesiástica Argentina, II (January-February, 1959), 92.

⁸² "Crónica: educación," Revista Eclesiástica Argentina, II (September-October, 1959), 537.

⁸³ Angel Miguel Centeno, Cuatro años de una política religiosa (Buenos Aires: Editorial Desarrollo, 1964), pp. 64-65, 105-06.

Religion in Public School Textbooks

Laicists could not stop the Catholic inroads made into the textbooks used by the national schools as long as the Ucristas controlled the Ministry of Education.⁸⁴ With the election of Arturo Illia, lay forces became heartened that UCRP control of the Ministry would mean the redress of their grievances against Roman Catholic indoctrination in textbooks used to teach Argentine history and democratic education.

The Liga Argentina de Cultura Laica sent documents to the Ministry of Education between December 1963 and March 1964, denouncing the content of some textbooks used in the teaching of democratic education and Argentine history.⁸⁵ The Democratic Socialists were the mainstay of this Liga ever since some of their members had founded it in 1932. The Liga was also joined in its protests by the Communist writer on education and politics Atilio Torrassa. He denounced these texts in a letter to the leading Cordobes

⁸⁴An editorial denounced these efforts as totalitarian. ("¿Libro escolar único y oficial?" La Prensa, July 28, 1958, p. 8.)

⁸⁵"Nuevas críticas sobre textos de enseñanza," La Prensa, March 16, 1964, p. 8.

newspaper, La Vox del Interior.⁸⁶ The liberal magazine Primera Plana agreed with these criticisms in an article of December 1963.⁸⁷

Laicists condemned passages in various texts as undemocratic, anti-liberal, pro-Catholic, etc. In them canon law was held to be predominant over civil law, and the betterment of conditions for workers, blacks, and women was attributed to Catholicism. Ideas on government did not counter those of right-wing nationalists and clerics: government by the people was utopian; representative government was impossible to realize in practice; the French Revolution was a catastrophe; and the presidency of Roca and the Revolution of 1890 were condemned since they unleashed religious persecution.⁸⁸

The use of officially sanctioned texts that contained Catholic and nationalist teachings had been going on since the first presidency of Perón. What is surprising is that

⁸⁶Atilio Torrassa, "Los clericales y la enseñanza," La Vanguardia, March 18, 1964, pp. 3-4.

⁸⁷"¿Quien controla los textos escolares?" Primera Plana, II (December 24, 1963), 34.

⁸⁸Liga Argentina de Cultura Laica, Escuela sectaria y textos de educación democrática (unpaginated monograph; Buenos Aires, 1964).

they were updated and continued in use even during the elected Radical administrations of Frondizi and Illia. Some of these books continue in classroom use in spite of protests against them from laicist groups.⁸⁹

Spread of Catholic Schools Since 1958

Laws Favorable to Private Schools

The school system of the church was able to spread rapidly after 1958 due to the cooperation of the national and provincial administrations. With their help, it secured the passage of laws or the issuance of decree-laws that aided its "mission" to educate. It also demanded and often received more state financing of its schools.

The Estatuto del Docente assured private schools of state financing of their staffs after 1958. With this foot in the door, the private sector concentrated on widening the application of the Estatuto to their school system, and on getting more of their schools incorporated into the national system so that they would be eligible for funds under the terms of the Estatuto. Decree 12.546 of October 11, 1960 granted state retirement benefits to teachers in

⁸⁹Letter from Campobassi to author, Buenos Aires, December 27, 1974.

private primary and secondary schools that were incorporated in official plans.⁹⁰

The subsequent movement on the part of private secondary schools to become incorporated or begin new classes and hire more teachers must have been costly for the state, because on August 22, 1962, Decree 8534 warned that incorporation and authorization for more classes "no lleva implícito el derecho a percibir contribución del Estado en los términos de la ley 13.047 /1947 Estatuto del Docente/ y disposiciones concordantes y reglamentarias."⁹¹

The Onganía government extended state aid to cover more private schools and their activities. In August 1968, private secondary schools that were technical were granted a wide range of tax exemptions. In a note accompanying the decree, it was argued that costs for technical schools had skyrocketed, especially for laboratory equipment, and that it was the "deber del Estado favorecer no sólo la permanencia de las escuelas e institutos privados de enseñanza técnica existentes sino también su incremento,"⁹²

⁹⁰ALA 1960, XX-A, p. 831.

⁹¹ALA 1962, XXII-A, p. 655.

⁹²Ley 17.827, August 5, 1968, ALA 1968, XXVIII-B, p. 2007.

Increase in Number of Catholic Schools

Private Sector

The favorable laws that aided private schools helped the private sector to expand in the educational field after 1958, especially on the secondary and university levels. From 1961 to 1971 there was a 68.4% increase in the number of private schools.⁹³

As of 1971, 17% of all Argentine schools were private, educating 20% of the school population. In other words, one out of five Argentine students attended a private school.⁹⁴ The proportion of students attending private secondary schools was double that of those attending private primary schools: one-sixth or 560,230 out of 3,671,451 students were enrolled in private primary schools, whereas one-third or 331,307 out of 1,007,537 students were registered in private secondary schools, for percentages of 15.3% enrolled in private primary schools and 32.4% in private secondary

⁹³Argentina, Secretaria de Estado de Cultura y Educación, La educación en cifras, 1958-1967 (Buenos Aires: Departamento de Estadística Educativa, 1968 [?]), p. 127.

⁹⁴Argentina, Ministerio de Cultura y Educación, Estadística educativa, 1971 (Buenos Aires: Departamento de Estadística Educativa, 1971), pp. 26, 31.

schools.⁹⁵

Figures for 1971 do not show the phenomenal growth of private normal schools since they were phased out during 1969-70.⁹⁶ In 1958 there were 290 private normal schools with 49,255 students enrolled; by 1967 there were 565 schools with 108,569 students. This contrasts with the slower increase of public normal schools: in 1958 there were 144 public normal schools with about 72,700 students, whereas in 1967, although there were 315 normal schools, they enrolled 95,000 students, an increase of only 20,000 pupils over the nine-year period, compared to the private schools' doubling of their student body.⁹⁷

Catholic Schools

The figures for Catholic schools separated out from the over-all figures for private schools show that Catholic schools, too, were found predominantly in the richer areas of Argentina. In the federal capital, 24.8% of the primary schools were Catholic, and 43.8% of the secondary schools.⁹⁸

⁹⁵Argentina, Ministerio de Cultura y Educación, "Alumnos matriculados; 1900-1971." (mimeographed page).

⁹⁶See below, p. 343; and epilogue, pp. 371-72.

⁹⁷Argentina, Secretaria de Estado de Cultura y Educación, La educación en cifras, 1958-1967, pp. 56, 58.

⁹⁸Miguel Petty, "Dimensiones de la escuela católica

The federal capital and the richer provinces of Buenos Aires, Córdoba, and Santa Fé contained 72% of the Catholic primary and secondary schools in all of Argentina.⁹⁹

Catholic schools accounted for the major part of the private sector in 1971. Of the 3,991 private secondary and primary schools in Argentina, 2,401 or sixty percent were Catholic. There were almost the same number of Catholic schools on the primary as on the secondary levels; 1,188 primary to 1,213 secondary Catholic schools respectively. Since there were fewer private schools on the secondary level (1,890) than on the primary level (2,101), the Catholic predominance in private secondary education was even greater--64.2% of private secondary schools were Catholic. And most of these Catholic secondary schools were baccalaureate (60.9%) rather than commercial (32.3%) or technical-industrial schools (6.8%).¹⁰⁰

The enrollments in normal schools grew to such an

en la Argentina," Revista del Centro de Investigaciones y Acción Social, XXI (May, 1972), 20, 24.

⁹⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁰Petty arrived at these figures by using a combination of sources since no official statistics separated out Catholic schools and students from the general category of private schools and students. (Petty, p. 22.)

extent that there was a surplus of teachers who could not find employment. The Onganía government decided to reclassify normal schools and transfer them to the baccalaureate program, making it harder for teachers to prepare and graduate since the baccalaureate curriculum was more rigorous.¹⁰¹ By 1971, there were no students registered in normal schools.¹⁰²

The Catholic strength relative to the public sector was more apparent on the secondary level because there were fewer public secondary schools. Overall, 10% of Argentina's schools were Catholic in 1971. But on the primary level only 5.9% of them were Catholic, whereas on the secondary level 31.3% were.¹⁰³ Moreover, Catholic primary schools enrolled 8% of Argentina's elementary schoolchildren,¹⁰⁴ but Catholic secondary schools enrolled 21% of the nation's secondary students.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹See below, epilogue, pp. 374-75.

¹⁰²Argentina, Ministerio de Cultura y Educación, "Alumnos matriculados: 1900-1971" (mimeographed page).

¹⁰³Petty, p. 21.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

¹⁰⁵Since there were no exact figures available on the number of students in Catholic secondary schools, the statistic of 21% was arrived at by the author of this thesis by assuming that Catholic schools enrolled the same average number of pupils as did all private schools. Thus, the num-

That 31% of Argentina's secondary schools enrolled 21% of the students was explained by the statistics for class size. There was a smaller teacher-student ratio in the private secondary schools which enrolled on an average half the number of pupils that public schools did, 171.6 to 321.8 respectively.¹⁰⁶ Even though there were more teachers per pupil in the private schools, the private schools were less costly to the state than the public ones, since the private schools were also collecting tuition from parents.¹⁰⁷

Upper and middle class parents, it seemed, pursued a private education for their children and were the only parents who could afford it.¹⁰⁸ In the poorer provinces

ber of Catholic baccalureate schools was multiplied by the number of pupils per school (738.7 x 184.25) and added to the number of pupils calculated in a like manner for the commercial (391.8 x 155.51) and industrial (82.5 x 155.41) Catholic schools, resulting in a figure of 209,856 Catholic secondary students in a secondary school population of 1,007,537.

¹⁰⁶Petty calculated that in the private sector, 22.9% of the nation's schools enrolled 23.4% of its primary pupils, and 47.4% of its secondary schools enrolled 32.9% of its students. Thus there is little difference in the teacher-student ratios between public and private schools on the primary level, but a large difference on the secondary. (Petty, pp. 17-19.)

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 19.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., pp. 20, 24.

there were few private schools, and the private schools that existed were mainly Catholic. In the provinces of La Rioja, Corrientes, Jujuy, Santiago, and Catamarca only 25% of the secondary schools were private. In the richer federal capital of Buenos Aires, 37.8% of the primary schools were private, and 71.5% of the secondary schools were private.¹⁰⁹

Thus the private, and in particular the Catholic, sector of education increased its schools and enrollments after the fall of Perón and with the Estatuto del Docente of 1958. Public school teachers and statisticians had not built their own constituency to effectively counter private school advocates. Those running the state identified with the private education and, oftentimes, with Catholic values and education.

¹⁰⁹Ibid.

CHAPTER TWELVE

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION SINCE 1958

Political Background: Frondizi to Onganía

Frondizi's government secured the passage of a law which recognized the academic titles of private universities and provided for state recognition of their professional titles. (See chapter ten.) His government also respected the autonomy of the national universities, and they were never intervened. The moneys budgeted for the national universities were increased during the Frondizi administration.¹ A salary scale was instituted for university faculty and administration in order to "implantar la dedicación exclusiva en la docencia."² In short, Frondizi established a system of private universities while amply compensating the national university system with funds and respect for their internal freedom to administer themselves.³

¹Argentina, Ministerio de Hacienda, Presupuesto general de la administración nacional para el año 1960, (2 vols., Buenos Aires: Ministerio de Hacienda, 1960 [?]), II, 930-1012.

²D. 13.501, October 31, 1960, ALA 1960, XX-A, p. 840.

³Luna, Argentina de Perón a Lanusse, p. 130.

The interim government of Guido continued the university policy of Frondizi. However, the Inspección General de la Enseñanza Universitaria Privada, established by Decree 1404--the same decree which implemented the Law for Private Universities (Law 14.557)--was put directly under the Minister of Education and Justice.⁴ This meant that private universities would only have to deal with the Chief Executive and his appointed minister instead of with an educational bureaucracy that could well be predisposed to favor the national university system.

In 1963 the Popular Radicals, or UCRP, won the presidency of Argentina, but not a clear majority in Congress. UCRP did not disband the private universities, as one might have expected because of their previous opposition to them, for two reasons. First, without a majority in Congress UCRP could not have succeeded in passing legislation to abolish the right of private universities to seek state recognition of their professional titles; and secondly, public opinion now accepted private universities.⁵

⁴D. 6814, July 16, 1962, ALA 1962, XXII-A, p. 578.

⁵Luna, Argentina de Perón a Lanusse, pp. 172-73.

The UCRP administration of President Illia continued to support the national universities with funds and a respect for their autonomy as had Frondizi.

One innovation on its part was to pave the way for the establishment of provincial universities. On October 29, 1965, national validity was legislated by Congress for titles awarded by provincial universities. The only proviso was that the curriculum of the universities directed by the provinces assure "una formación cultural y un nivel científico y profesional equivalente al señalado en el párrafo anterior."⁶ The paragraph referred to was that of article 1 of the law for private universities (Law 14.557). Unlike the law for private universities, graduates of provincial universities would not have to pass state examinations in order to receive habilitating titles. Although Illia promulgated the law at the end of 1965, there were no provincial universities established until Onganía's era.

Onganía's coup soon led to violations of the autonomy of the national universities, observed by all governments since 1957. Obsessed by the notion that these universities were hotbeds of communism, Onganía decided to reorganize

⁶Ley 16.777, October 29, 1965, ALA 1965, XXV-C, pp. 2139-40.

them. This view was reconfirmed when the rector of the University of Buenos Aires, Hilario Fernández Long, a Humanist, convoked the Superior Council of the UBA and condemned the military's coup of June 26, 1966 two days later.⁷ On July 29, Onganía responded in two ways: he and the Junta de Comandantes en Jefe, which acted as a legislative body, ordered the police to physically occupy the UBA's Faculties of Exact Sciences and Architecture;⁸ on the same day, a new university law was promulgated, amounting to an intervention of all faculties and the dissolution of most student organizations:

Art. 3^o--Los rectores o presidentes de las universidades nacionales y los decanos de sus respectivas Facultades ejercerán funciones administrativas, siendo sus actos provisionales, correspondiendo al Ministerio de Educación el ejercicio de las atribuciones reservadas por sus estatutos a los consejos superiores o directivos.

Art. 8^o--Los centros o agrupaciones estudiantiles, deberán abstenerse de realizar actividades políticas. La violación de esta pro-

⁸ Joseph F. Bunnett et al., A Report to the American Academic Community on the Present Argentine Situation (monograph, Austin, Texas: Latin American Studies Association, 1967), pp. 17-27.

hibición autorizará al Ministerio de Educación para disolver el centro responsable de ello.⁹

In protest of this new law and the physical occupation of their universities, professors and student leaders resigned in mass protest from their posts at the national universities of Buenos Aires, Córdoba, La Plata, and the Litoral.¹⁰ At the national universities of the Sur, Cuyo, and Nordeste there were no protests of the new law, and their rectors and professors remained in their positions.¹¹

An American investigator of this intervention in 1966, suggested that the Roman Catholic "right" sought Onganía's repressive reorganization of the national universities in order to:

. . . mark out the moderate, post-Conciliar and ideologically oriented sections of the more liberal active Catholic groups for attack along with the Communists, Trotskyites, and other sympathizers of movements for radical social change.¹²

To be sure, liberal Catholics such as the Humanists had

⁹Ley 16.912, July 29, 1966, ALA 1966, XXVI-B, p. 782.

¹⁰Bergadá, p. 270.

¹¹Ibid., p. 271.

¹²Bunnett, p. 24.

protested along with the Reformists of FUA the military overthrow of President Illia. Rightist Catholics such as the "Integralistas" had used physical violence to oppose the Reformists in Córdoba after the coup.¹³ Another Catholic rightist group, the Ateneo, founded in Santa Fé in 1955, took advantage of the coup to gain posts at the University of the Litoral.¹⁴

Onganía's government turned to APAC (Asociación de los Profesionales y Estudiantes), the fifth branch of Acción Católica Argentina, for assistance in weeding out the leftists in the national universities and in governing them after the Reformists and Humanists had been suppressed. APAC set up alumni associations that served to guide the universities in disassociating from Marxist politics.¹⁵ APAC particularly thought itself successful in depoliticizing the universities of Córdoba and Buenos Aires. By 1968, a Jesuit-published survey on education in Argentina could report that a few Marxist professors were to be found only

¹³Bergadá, pp. 270-72.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 272.

¹⁵"Agrupación de Profesionales de la A.C.A.," 30 años de Acción Católica, 1931-1961, p. 227.

in the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters at UBA, and that "el problema del marxismo" was at the "nivel del estudio-antado."¹⁶

The Onganía government also changed the 1958 university law which prohibited private universities from receiving public moneys. At the end of 1967, a law was decreed for the private universities whose article 16 said the following:

. . . se faculta al Poder Ejecutivo para acordar a los establecimientos autorizados que lo soliciten la contribución económica del Estado, cuando aquél considere que ello conviene al interés nacional.¹⁷

This was a dramatic break with the original law for private universities, one which its opponents had foreseen. However, private universities still could only issue academic titles; the system of state examinations for habilitating titles was kept, probably because it was only a formality.

The decree that implemented the above law spelled out what kinds of aid would be given to private universities, limiting it to scientific research projects that had won the approval of the Consejo de Rectores de las Universi-

¹⁶Bergadá, p. 273.

¹⁷Ley 17.604, December 29, 1967, ALA 1968, XXVIII-A, p. 156.

dades Privadas. A last proviso was that the projects had to coincide with "the national interest."¹⁸ These specifications meant that the national government would not be funding private universities on a par with the national ones. But the wording of article 16 of Law 17.604 did open the door for future state financing.

The Onganía government abetted the support of private universities in other ways. In 1968, the Municipality of Buenos Aires gave forty hectares of land to Salvador, the Jesuit University of Buenos Aires,¹⁹ something that could not have been done without the approval of the national government. In 1969-70, the national government gave land to the University of Patagonia "San Juan Bosco," a Catholic university in the town of Comodoro Rivadavia, along with 300 million pesos for the construction of buildings.²⁰ Another kind of support came from the Ministerio de Bienestar Social which gave money to private as well as

¹⁸D. 8472, December 31, 1969, ALA 1970, XXX-A, p. 341.

¹⁹The Jesuits returned this land when state aid was not forthcoming to invest in campus buildings. (Interview with Miguel Petty, S.J., Buenos Aires, August 23, 1972.)

²⁰Interview with José María Cravero, head of the Dirección de Altos Estudios, Buenos Aires, September 4, 1972.)

state universities in the form of student scholarships. And the Province of Salta (which was under federal intervention like all other provinces) likewise gave money in the form of scholarships to the Universidad Católica de Salta.²¹ Lastly, the government created a Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Técnica (CONACYT) to support technical and scientific research to promote the national goals of development and security. Both public and private institutions were eligible to receive state funds toward this end.²²

Provincial Universities

The potential of the provinces to become involved in higher education was illustrated by Salta's support of a Catholic university discussed in the previous paragraph. As also noted above, Congress passed a law in 1965, during the time of Illia, that recognized the validity of provincial university titles; in 1968, this law was revised by Onganía. Law 17.778 provided in article 1 that provincial degrees and titles were to be recognized by the state if the universities awarding them had achieved nation-

²¹Ibid.

²²Ley 18.020, December 24, 1968, ALA 1969, XXIX-A, pp. 21-23.

al government recognition. Provincial universities were to enjoy academic autonomy and financial autarky, but lest the Onganía dictatorship lose control of these universities it was established that "autonomía y autarquía no podrán obstaculizar el ejercicio de las atribuciones y deberes que competen a otras autoridades nacionales o locales respecto al mantenimiento del orden público y el imperio de la legislación común en el ámbito universitario."²³ Persons connected with the provincial universities were reminded that "actividad política," "proselitismo," and "propaganda política" were prohibited.²⁴ This law was implemented by Decree 1617 on April 2, 1969.²⁵

Provincial universities were founded after the 1965 law was passed, and by 1967 there were four of them--the Universidad Provincial de Mar del Plata, the Universidad de La Pampa, the Universidad de Neuquén, and the Universidad de San Juan--containing only 1,838 matriculated students. It was not until 1971 that two more provinces established universities--the Instituto Superior de Ciencias Económicas de Jujuy, and the Facultad de Ciencias Aplicadas

²³Article 7, Ley 17.778, June 12, 1968, ALA 1968, XXVIII-B, p. 1888.

²⁴Article 13, ibid., p. 1889.

²⁵ALA 1969, XXIX-A, p. 409.

a la Industria de San Rafael, of Mendoza. The total number of matriculated students had doubled to 4,136 in 1971.²⁶

Catholic Universities

Proliferation

The rapid increase of private universities, most of which were Catholic, was striking. Factors that accounted for this development were the increasing demand for higher education, the efforts of the Argentine hierarchy to satisfy the demand, the ease with which students could enter the private universities, and conservative families' wishing their children to avoid the turbulent politics of the national universities.

Demand for university education increased with the number of graduates from secondary schools, which tripled from 1950 to 1971; moreover, an increasing proportion of them wanted to continue on to the university. In 1950 there were 323,584 secondary students, and by 1971 there were 1,007,537.²⁷ In response, university enrollment quad-

²⁶Argentina, Ministerio de Cultura y Educación, Estadística educativa, síntesis 1967-71 (Buenos Aires: Departamento de Estadística Educativa, 1971), pp. 111-12, 122.

²⁷Argentina, Ministerio de Cultura y Educación, "Alumnos matriculados, 1900-1971" (mimeographed page).

rupted from 1950 to 1971, from 80,292 students to 269,912, the biggest increases being registered in the 1960's. And it was the private universities which were expanding most rapidly to respond to this demand. In 1965, almost 93% of Argentina's university students were enrolled in the national universities, 6.5% in private universities, and .5% in the provincial universities. By 1971, however, the private universities enrolled 15% of all university students, the national universities 83.5%, and the provincial universities 1.5%.²⁸

Another reason for the expansion of private Catholic universities was that the Argentine hierarchy was zealously establishing as many as it could. The papacy itself was pressuring the Argentine bishops to found Catholic universities as part of its campaign to establish Catholic universities all over the world.²⁹ Dell'Oro Maini, the Minister of Education who wrote the decree committing the executive branch to recognize the habilitating titles of private universities, was amazed at the eagerness of the Argentine bishops to found universities as early as 1955,

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Interview with Dr. Jorge Mejía, editor of Criterio, Buenos Aires, August 22, 1972.

when the decree was made public.³⁰ By 1962 there were seven Catholic universities.³¹ A report of the Centro de Investigación y Acción Social of the Jesuits concluded that the Argentine hierarchy authorized the creation of too many Catholic universities in 1955 and subsequently, thereby watering down standards.³²

For the standards of admittance were lower than those for the national universities. Many of the private university professors were also not as qualified as their counterparts in the national universities. Their salary was less than that of the faculty of the national universities, and sometimes they were not paid at all.³³ The physical plant of these universities was also inferior to that of the national universities: the majority of them were located in secondary school buildings of the church that could only

³⁰When Dell'Oro Maini showed his skepticism over the possibility that so many universities could be established and properly sustained, some of the bishops became angry, thinking that he opposed them. (Interview with Atilio Dell'Oro Maini, Buenos Aires, August 21, 1972.)

³¹Argentina, Secretaria de Estado de Cultura y Educación, La educación en cifras, 1958-1967, p. 87.

³²Bergadá, p. 263.

³³Ibid., pp. 262-65.

be used after school hours, thereby limiting the campus life of the university students. Equipment was lacking, and libraries were puny.³⁴

The administration of these new private universities, many of whom were clerics, also lacked experience in setting up and managing universities. They chose the path of least resistance and set up institutions that offered courses in the humanities and social sciences, programs less costly to run than those in physical sciences.³⁵ With time, a few innovations were introduced, such as a doctorate of enology being offered at the University of Mendoza;³⁶ departments being made the key administrative sub-divisions, as in universities in the United States, at the Jesuit-controlled University of Salta; and an exchange of professors and students being worked out for research in physics and

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ana María Jalón, Argentine Survey S.J.: II--situación educacional (Buenos Aires: Centro de Investigaciones y Acción Social, 1968), Part 1, pp. 218-23.

³⁶Dr. Fernando Storni, S.J., presented this information at a seminar on "The Argentine University," held at the University of Salvador in Buenos Aires, September 16, 1969. ("Amplio debate sobre la integración del sistema universitario argentino: el destino de las universidades estatales, privadas y provinciales," Estudios, LVIII, no. 606 [October, 1969], 34-38.)

electricity between Bucknell University in the United States and the Catholic University of Córdoba, financed by A.I.D. with \$300,000.³⁷ Catholic universities also began by the late 1960's to offer courses of a more technical nature, such as business administration and engineering.³⁸

The political quietism of the Catholic universities attracted students, especially the daughters of families who did not wish them to be "contaminated" by leftist ideas prevalent in the national universities. The first rector of the University of Salvador had to set up quotas for females to keep the University from being swamped by them.³⁹ But the female demand for places in the University of Salvador persisted, and by 1968 there were more females than males, the quota system having been waived. The faculties of philosophy and humanities of Catholic universities, in general, are inundated with females.⁴⁰ The high number of women in the Catholic universities not only resulted from

³⁷"La Univ. Católica de Córdoba firmó un importante contrato," La Prensa, August 11, 1963, p. 8.

³⁸Storni, p. 35.

³⁹Interview with Daniel Obregón, S.J., first rector of the University of Salvador, Buenos Aires, July 17, 1972.

⁴⁰Bergadá, p. 364.

the lack of political upheaval, but also may have contributed to this lack.

Not only female, but male, students in the Catholic universities were politically inactive and relatively conservative compared to their peers in the national universities. They did not occupy their universities or bring classes to a halt through boycotts or strikes. A 1967 report issued by student members of the Federación de Estudiantes de la Universidad del Salvador (FEUS) averred that Salvador had a student body drawn mainly from the upper social strata of Argentina since poorer students could not afford the tuition.⁴¹ This difference in social background may have had some effect in dampening student unrest, and the payment of tuition could also have made the students (or at least their parents) more concerned with keeping the universities open, with the result that they were less inclined to occupy their universities or call boycotts of them.

University administrators helped maintain an apolitical atmosphere by an occasional use of disciplinary measures

⁴¹Primera Comisión de Estudios del Centro de Estudiantes de Letras de la Universidad del Salvador, En pos de una nueva universidad, ed. Jorge Cavodeasse (Buenos Aires: Federación de Estudiantes de la Universidad del Salvador, 1967), p. 20.

and even dismissal against Catholic university students engaged in political activity. Universidad Católica Argentina students were temporarily suspended by the administration for yelling out for freedom for imprisoned students and for university autonomy during the inauguration ceremony of a new faculty of social sciences and economics attended by Onganía's Minister of the Interior.⁴² One of these students, Eduardo Saguier, was permanently suspended, and he sued in court to regain admittance; he lost the suit and appealed to the Argentine Supreme Court. The Court backed up the lower court's ruling that UCA's statutes permitted the administration to expel a student: the argument was that the student had accepted the university's restrictions when he enrolled. Meanwhile, Saguier had enrolled in the University of Salvador; again he was expelled, this time for writing adversely of the Argentine episcopacy. The courts again refused to reinstate him on the same grounds as in the previous suit.⁴³ Thus the administrations of private and Catholic universities could enforce a political quietism.

⁴²Interview with Eduardo Saguier, Buenos Aires, September 9, 1972.

⁴³These court decisions appear in newspaper accounts of September 14, 1968, and April 8, 1969.

National Universities

The Perón government had not increased the number of national universities. Instead it had made tuition free and had financially supported the existing six national universities. The provisional government of Aramburu, on the other hand, acted to meet the increasing demand for university education both by issuing the decree-law for private universities and keeping it on the books, and by creating two new national universities in the Northeast and in the South in 1956--Universidad del Nordeste and Universidad del Sur. The administration of Frondizi, while supporting the bill for private universities, also acted to create another national university in October 1959--Universidad Tecnológica Nacional. This university was the successor to the Universidad Obrera of Ley 13.229/1948, founded by the Peronists as a non-university secondary school which took in primary school graduates and taught them a trade. The Universidad Tecnológica Nacional would now function as a university to prepare "profesionales en el ámbito de la tecnología para satisfacer las necesidades correspondientes de la industria, sin descuidar la formación cultural y humanística."⁴⁴ The dictatorship of

⁴⁴Article 2, Ley 14.855, ALA 1959, XIX-A, p. 112.

Onganía added a tenth national university--Universidad Nacional de Rosario--which began operation in 1969. .

In spite of these additions to the national university system, enrollment in national universities increased very slightly and came almost to a standstill during Onganía's administration. In 1967, there were 221,522 matriculated students in the national universities; in 1971, there were 225,671.⁴⁵ In contrast, the private universities in 1967 had 17,092 matriculated students, and in 1971, 40,105, a threefold increase!⁴⁶

Student Politics

An American authority on Argentine university students has noted that their politics in the post-Perón era have been characterized by "negativism." He attributed this to the authoritarian control exercised over the students for a twenty-five year period, 1930-55. Subsequently, national university students have "generally opposed the economic and political policies of the national government," offering few "practical alternatives for the solution of national problems." The 1958 campaign against

⁴⁵Argentina, Ministerio de Cultura y Educación, Estadística educativa, síntesis 1967-71, p. 111.

⁴⁶Ibid.

article 28 illustrated the negativism of the students: this campaign only served to weaken the overall student movement and distracted students from the priorities of educational reform and betterment. The Humanists broke with the Reformists at this time, beginning the withdrawal and splintering of groups from and within FUA.⁴⁷

The Humanists attracted many adherents and votes between 1955-64 due to the prestige of their anti-Perón stand, their seeking to grapple with social and economic problems, and the vogue of Christian Democrat ideas generally in Latin America.⁴⁸ Humanist strength was greatest in the University of Buenos Aires, where they won elections in 1961, beginning with the alumni. By November 1962, the Humanists had swept all three sectors of the tripartite Assembly, alumni, students, and faculty, enabling them to elect a Humanist rector (Julio Hipólito Guillermo Olivera) and vice-rector (Hilario Fernández Long). But divisions soon appeared among the Humanists between the more liberal and conservative members; members became apathetic and did not turn out for elections. In 1965, Olivera resigned as rector and was re-

⁴⁷Walter, Student Politics in Argentina, pp. 167-68, 192-93.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 168.

placed by Fernández Long, a Humanist who had voted along with the Reformists. By 1966, both Humanism and Reformism had veered toward the left and were reconciling politically. Both groups joined in denouncing Onganía's coup and intervention of the national universities.⁴⁹

Both the Humanists and the Reformists were challenged politically by the increasing influence of the Communists, who by 1964 dominated the leadership of FUA and most affiliated local federations. This also caused many student groups to disaffiliate from FUA, and after 1964 the Communist leadership itself began to lose its following. Splits occurred among the Communist students, and splinter groups variously known as Trotskyites, Maoists, Stalinists, and Castroites became active.⁵⁰

The fourth general category of university students in the post-Perón period had been categorized by Walter as the "Conservative" faction. Although he is vague about what students would fit into this category, it seems that he included essentially all who did not support the Humanist, Reformist, or Communist factions. Walter pointed out

⁴⁹Bergadá, pp. 267-69.

⁵⁰Walter, pp. 172-74.

that the leftist reputation of the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters of the University of Buenos Aires did not correspond to the results of a poll made in 1955-56, which showed that the political choices of university students were basically the same as those of Argentina's middle class.⁵¹ He also cited a 1958 census of the University of Buenos Aires student body that revealed that more than 90% of the students were from the middle classes.⁵² Thus, the leftist activism of Argentina's university students was overrated by Onganía and public opinion: the bulk of middle class students tend to reflect the political beliefs of the Argentine middle classes, which are not truly revolutionary.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that since the 1918 Reform, Argentine university students had been genuinely concerned with the solution of national social, economic, and political problems.⁵³ And, though initial student protests against the Onganía regime gave way for a time to passive acceptance, under conditions of increasing repres-

⁵¹A. M. Eichebaum de Babini, Algunas características de los estudiantes de la Universidad de Buenos Aires (Buenos Aires; 1958), p. 36, as quoted in Walter, p. 201.

⁵²Walter, p. 187.

⁵³Ibid., pp. 172, 187.

sion opposition was bound to break out again. In May 1969, a minor cafeteria incident at the University of the Northeast in Corrientes sparked rioting in several cities. Labor union support for the university students in Cordoba highlighted the failure of Onganía's economic program among the highest paid workers in Argentina and among the heretofore pacific middle classes, plus the fact that Onganía's dictatorship could not guarantee order. State security services, university authorities, all appeared inept.⁵⁴ Thus, university students set in motion an alliance of labor, intellectuals, and middle sectors that successfully ended the Onganía regime in June 1970. Argentina's university students began the 70's still viewing their universities as political as well as educational institutions, a process unleashed with the 1918 Reform.

⁵⁴Luna, Argentina de Perón a Lanusse, pp. 202-04.

EPILOGUE

After 1955, most of the divisions among Argentines coalesced around the issue of Perón and his Party and whether they should be allowed again to govern Argentina. Neither students, teachers, military groups, churchmen, political parties, nor economic classes were unified on the issue. Argentina remained fragmented politically and socially, and failed to develop a coherent policy on significant national issues, including education.

In the field of education repeated quarrels illustrate that political parties and institutions were not able to confront contemporary realities, but were still bogged down by old problems, personalities, and divisions. Church-state controversies of the 19th century over education were still being fought out in the last half of the 20th century, absorbing time, money, and energy that could have been applied to pressing economic and social problems.

Educational policies should have dealt with problems such as the high drop-out rate in early school years. Over half of the children enrolled in the first grade did not reach the sixth and last grade of primary school. Yet, in 1970, only 41 percent of the public (national, provin-

cial, and municipal) expenditures for education were directed to the primary level.¹ This was because Argentina's educational system was top-heavy, with high enrollments in secondary and post-secondary schools that absorbed respectively 34.2 percent and 24.8 percent of the public funds.² Since most educators agreed that a minimum of three years of schooling was needed for a person to be literate, Argentina was not supplying enough funds to develop basic literacy and skills needed for further learning by a very large segment of its youth. And Argentina was favoring the urban and upper and middle sectors of its population by pumping money into post-primary schools, most of which were located in the federal capital and other big cities.

This upward bias in the allocation of funds aggravated the regional differences in Argentina's educational system. At all grade levels more students in relation to the school-age population were matriculating or graduating in the federal capital than in the provinces. In 1962, less than half of those entering the primary schools in 15 prov-

¹Thomas E. Weil et al., Area Handbook for Argentina (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1974).

²Ibid.

inces completed the sixth grade, whereas the figure in the federal capital was 87 percent. In that same year, only the federal capital had as much as one-third of its secondary school aged population graduating from secondary school.³ In 1971, almost half of the matriculated primary students were in schools in Buenos Aires and the federal capital, more than half of the secondary school students were in schools in Buenos Aires and the federal capital, and more than half of Argentina's university students were matriculated in universities in Buenos Aires and the federal capital.⁴ Thus the allocation of educational resources benefited the federal capital and the middle and upper sectors in Greater Buenos Aires at the expense of the rest of the country and its rural poor.

The number of secondary school students as a percentage of the school age population (based on the median secondary school attendance age of sixteen years) was 35% in 1967, and rising about one percentage point per year. Un-

³Unfortunately, Hannon did not include figures for the province of Buenos Aires in his data. (Donald Paul Hannon, "The Argentine Educational System: A Quantitative Analysis," Master's thesis, Austin, University of Texas, 1968, pp. 26-29.

⁴Argentina, Ministerio de Cultura y Educación, Estadística educativa, 1971, p. 32.

til the Onganía government changed their classification, the expansion of the secondary level was most pronounced in the normal schools.⁵ After 1969, these students were transferred to baccalaureate programs, dramatically increasing the number of graduates from bachillerato secondary schools from 167,000 in 1969 to 403,282 in 1970.⁶

Drop-outs at this level were frequent, amounting in 1971 to 47% of the matriculants in the baccalaureate program, 59% of those in the industrial-technical, and 78% of students in the agricultural secondary schools. Drop-outs from these secondary schools, moreover, had few skills to equip them to contribute to Argentina's economic development since the courses in most of these schools were liberal arts rather than industrial, technical, or agricultural.⁷

The problem of the universities was not so much the high drop-out rate, but too few places to offer to those applying for entrance. In the 1960's, for example, the University of Buenos Aires had to turn away 60% of the ap-

⁵Argentina, Ministerio de Cultura y Educación, "Alumnos matriculados: años 1900-1971" (mimeographed page).

⁶Ibid.

⁷Weil, Area Handbook, pp. 108-09.

plicants for the entering class.⁸ The national universities had to turn away 25,929 applicants or 32% of 80,097 aspirants in 1970.⁹ Since only about 7% of the university age population went on to a higher education as of 1965,¹⁰ they constituted a potential elite. However, university enrollments grew fast in Argentina, jumping from 117,000 in 1961 to 270,000 in 1971 and to almost 300,000 in 1973. This increase was due chiefly to the expanding private university system. But the national university continued to dominate in numbers, and during 1971-1973 President Alejandro Lanusse was reported to have created fifteen new national universities, mainly formed from existing units, industrial and commercial secondary schools and higher institutes. The enrollments were small--1,000 students being the largest--but they had the potential for future growth.¹¹

⁸ Jalón, Argentine Survey S.J.: II--situación educacional, Part 1, p. 218.

⁹ Argentina, Consejo de Rectores de Universidades Nacionales, "Ingresos a las universidades nacionales 1970," Universidades Nacionales, informativo 2 (Buenos Aires: Departamento Estadística, 1970), pp. 1-2.

¹⁰ Argentina, Secretaria de Estado de Cultura y Educación, La educación en cifras, 1958-1967, p. 9.

¹¹ Weil, p. 112.

Similar to the secondary education of Argentina, the university education the students received did not respond to the country's needs. The careers pursued in the university were not those that aided economic and technical development. Argentina had a maldistribution of physicians, with a superabundance in the cities and an acute shortage in outlying areas,¹² brought about in part by the highly specialized education they received in the universities for which facilities were generally lacking in small towns. The country had an oversupply of lawyers but needed more economists, agronomists, veterinarians, and engineers.¹³ The periodic interventions of the national universities had also hindered the development of strong programs in the physical sciences: in 1966, the Onganía intervention caused many full-time professors in the faculties of physical sciences to leave, further impeding Argentina's preparation of well-trained technicians.

Argentine governments have recently begun to emphasize technical training. On the secondary level, the Onganía administration transferred the education of elemen-

¹²Jonathan Kandell, "Bar to Medical Students is Debated in Argentina," New York Times, February 3, 1973, p. 10.

¹³Weil, pp. 116-20.

tary teachers to post-secondary or extra-university institutes whose enrollments jumped from 27,000 in 1969 to 38,000 in 1970 to almost 52,000 in 1971. Thus prospective teachers would finish their secondary education in the expanding technical-industrial and commercial school system, or in the baccalaureate schools, before they would go on to the two-year extra-university institutes for primary schoolteachers or the four-year extra-university programs for secondary schoolteachers. On the university level, economic faculties began to be created (as of 1959), and the number of engineering faculties was increased, especially when the National Technical University was created, enrolling 40% of those studying engineering in all of Argentina by 1971.¹⁴

But the future technical demands of Argentina could not be met as long as the universities were so inadequately financed--another educational problem of Argentina which the national government did not resolve. Although the national universities received a high percentage of the education budget, it was not enough to provide the teachers, and especially expensive technical equipment, for the soar-

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 116-18, 123-24.

ing number of students.¹⁵

The national government was not committing enough resources to education as a whole. In 1971, educational investment accounted for only 2.1% of Argentina's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) compared with 3.8% in Panama and Costa Rica, and the 4% invested by advanced countries.¹⁶ Teachers in Argentina were paid less than teachers in ten major world cities (after adjustments for the cost of living) according to a 1972 study of teacher income.¹⁷ University professors received low salaries, and poorly paid part-time faculty were increasingly employed. While schools and equipment remained run-down, the 1973 budget reduced the proportions doled out to education in previous years. From 1968-1972 education absorbed 14.6% of the national budget but the 1973 budget earmarked only 12.4% of the total for education. Economists maintain that the desirable portion for developing countries is between 15 and 20 percent.¹⁸

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 119-20.

¹⁶N. Eriksson, "Expenditure on Education," Review of the River Plate, CLIV (August 31, 1973), p. 315.

¹⁷Weil, p. 129.

¹⁸Eriksson, p. 315.

Although these federal budgets included funds for private education, the proponents of Catholic schools argued that the state saved money by financing private education. Using 1971 statistics, Miguel Petty, S.J., found that

. . . el costo para el gobierno, por alumno en el sector privado, es aproximadamente la mitad del costo para el gobierno por alumno en el sector oficial.¹⁹

If this were so, the savings for the national government were tremendous, since out of 5,600,000 pupils receiving education in Argentina in 1973, 1,300,000 or 23% were in private institutes.²⁰

Yet private education was becoming more dependent on state subsidies. In 1969, private teaching institutions were subsidized by the state to the extent of approximately 9 percent of their expenditures, which mainly went to staff salaries. In 1972, the proportion had increased to 19 percent. But the future of these state subsidies was not certain in 1973. Reports circulated that "certain groups with a strong bias toward State control" wanted to end state

¹⁹Petty, "Dimensiones de la escuela católica en la Argentina," Revista del Centro de Investigaciones y Acción Social, p. 19.

²⁰Eriksson, p. 316.

subsidies for private institutions imparting a sectarian or confessional education.²¹ And one of the planks of the Radical Party in the March 1973 presidential campaign called for the elimination of subsidies to private primary schools.²²

Instead of the private sector collaborating with the state to improve the quality of education in Argentina, the opposite was happening. Catholics claimed that their schools were hamstrung by the bureaucracy, stultifying education with legal red tape for equivalency examinations and curriculum changes.²³ A study reported that the quality of education offered in the Catholic universities was not "rigorous" since they lacked money and had proliferated too fast.²⁴ Catholic schools on the secondary level were offering little in the way of technical education. In the early 1960's public secondary schools sent 23.4% of their graduates into industry while private schools sent only 3.6%; the private schools sent 50% of their graduates into

²¹Ibid.

²²Weil, p. 100.

²³Petty, "Dimensiones de la escuela católica en la Argentina," pp. 25-26.

²⁴Bergadá, Argentine Survey S.J.: II--situación educacional, Part 2, pp. 275-76.

teaching while public schools sent only 23.4%.²⁵ Private schools, which were mainly Catholic, were motivated by a desire for profits, and expensive laboratories, machinery, workshops, etc., did not give the private investor much of a return on his investment. On the other hand, investors did receive an adequate return from secondary schools which were baccalaureate or chiefly offered courses that only required a blackboard and desks.²⁶ Catholic schools also continued to be criticized for catering to the elite rather than to the children of the poor.²⁷

In short, Argentine society was divided socio-economically and regionally: between a city population highly educated, often by Catholic secondary schools, with a surplus of lawyers and physicians, and a rural sector suffering from inadequate education, many of them drop-outs from primary school, and from a shortage of trained professionals, most of whom had gravitated to the cities. Argentine education reflected this socio-cultural division and, in addition, the fragmentation of the political sys-

²⁵Hannon, "The Argentine Educational System: A Quantitative Analysis," p. 63.

²⁶Eriksson, pp. 315-16.

²⁷Petty, pp. 17, 26.

tem, where 19th century issues between church and state on education remained bones of contention. In 1943 a military regime reversed a ban established in 1884 against religious education in the nation's public schools; in 1955, religion was again taken out of the public schools during regular class hours. In 1955 private universities, which it was generally understood would be Catholic, were promoted by a state decree that promised to recognize their professional degrees. After prolonged wrangling, this decree in 1958 attained the status of permanent legislation.

Underlying these issues is a question of patronage: should the state subsidize private--mainly Catholic--education, and by how much? A larger question involves whom the state should educate and for what purpose. When Argentina promotes private education it is promoting elitism and favoring urban groups of a high socio-economic status who will enter the traditional professions but not technical or administrative careers essential to economic development. The educational disarray symbolizes the inability of a fragmented Argentina to attain either a true national consensus on policy or even a coherent policy imposed by one faction upon another.

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